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'A' STEPMENS'

THE

RED PLEAK





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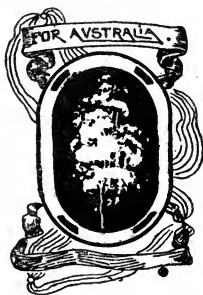
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THE RED PAGAN

To J. F. ARCHIBALD

A. G. STEPHENS.

THE RED PAGAN



SYDNEY:
The Bulletin Newspaper Company, Limited

MCMIV.

The greater part of the contents is reprinted, with some alteration, from "The Red Page" of "The Bulletin."

PR6037

T37 R4

1904

MAIN



THE RED PAGAN



“**W**HAT is Truth?” said jesting Pilate—and did he jest?—“and would not stay for an answer”—and did he not stay? The jest and the haste are Bacon’s imagination merely. They led the poor Nazarene “prophet” to the judgment-hall—led him, as one may picture, unwashed and dishevelled, weary for sleep, but with the fever of frenzy burning in his eyes. And the educated Roman—fresh and clean from his bed and his bath, leisurely digesting breakfast, eyeing the other with the large tolerance of the man of the world, pitying him and honouring him as one must always honour the sincere—opposed disciplined intellect to the vaguenesses of transcendental emotion. “Every one that is of the Truth heareth my voice,” said Jesus.

“What is Truth?” asked Pilate, gently.

And Jesus had no reply.

Did it flash in upon him, gazing at the suave Governor, that there is no abstract Truth which can be limited and defined? that one always argues from and to one’s own conception? that this man looking at

him, the type of another temperament, the embodiment of another race, another civilisation, might have a creed and canons of Truth which he, Jesus, did not comprehend, could never assimilate, yet none the less Truth—for Pilate? Did he realise how slight is any man's hold upon the Universe? how little any individual can understand of the infinite mass? how far the problems set before it surpass the capacity of this brain of yesterday's growth?

Or was Jesus merely silent, as we all are silent—or superficial—in face of a request to reduce the Abstract to the Concrete at two seconds' notice? in face of the urbane request for "a Definition"?

In either case, Jesus was silent—as Pilate might have been silent had Jesus posed the question. Pilate waited courteously for the reply that did not come; and, liking Jesus all the better because it did not come, tried hard to save the victim from the mob. And the mob was a ravening beast, as often.

"What is Literature?" It is an easier question, because it refers to a thing that is the creation of the human mind—that does dwell in a temple made with hands—that can be corrupted by moth and rust—that can be weighed and measured, and bought and sold, and borrowed by women who never return it. Literature is indeed not a concrete thing, but it cannot be separated entirely from the concrete. Destroy the

books that enshrine it, and you destroy Literature until another book shall be written. With the burning of the Alexandrian library Literature was burnt, though not to death; and every borrower's thumb-mark on a beautiful page is a defacement of the beauty of Literature.

Literature, then—but see what a good dictionary says—

The collective body of literary productions, embracing the entire results of knowledge and fancy preserved in writing.

That is good; but it is not satisfactory. Again—

The class of writings distinguished for beauty of style or expression, as poetry, essays, or history, in distinction from scientific treatises and works which contain positive knowledge; belles-lettres.

That is better; but still unhelpful—for, alas! it begs the question as a dictionary will. What is beauty of style or expression? Will beauty of style or expression by itself constitute Literature? It will not.—Close the dictionary: dive into the expanse.

Literature is the human mind's effective manifestation in written language.

That is put forward as the best definition attainable. For *effective*, if you like, read *forceful* or *forcible*. Everything is in the adjective. *Artistic* would be more satisfying in one sense; but what is artistic?

—where is your criterion of art or of beauty? No; beauty must be construed in terms of strength—it is a mode of strength, as heat is a mode of motion. When you say *effective*, you do not eliminate the taste-cavil, the quality-cavil, but you refer it to a quantity-standard that is more intelligible, more ponderable.

How much, and how many, and for how long, does a book impress, and move, and thrill? What active energy does it disengage? What is its equivalent in thought-rays? in emotion-volts? What is its force, its effect? Estimate that, find that, judge that, and you will know a book's universal value as Literature.

This standard of force is the ultimate standard. Tastes differ with individuals, countries, and eras; but three and two are five, and twice five are ten, everywhere in the universe.

The scale inevitably adjusts itself. *Uncle Tom's Cabin* impressed many, and much; but for how long? Catullus has moved much, and long; but how many? We argue that Catullus writes better Literature than Harriet Stowe—because people of "taste," people of "culture," people of "learning," prefer Catullus. Well, if it be so, in the long run Catullus's total force of achieved impressions will outweigh Harriet Stowe's. Her work dies; his lives through the ages. His mind's "effective manifestation" surpasses hers.

Style is a requisite of Literature; but what is style? Merely an aid to *effect*. Individual taste may prefer the florid or the simple; but florid style or simple is valuable only in so far as it impresses, gives force. Having defined Literature as the mind's effective manifestation in written language, you can proceed to define the things that go to make *effect*, and style is one of them. But style, and thought, and emotion, and interest, and melody, and picture — these are only factors in the total. The total is force. In the last resort Literature must be judged, like everything else, by the force it develops—the quantity of latent energy which it makes active.

“Then one must wait ten thousand years to judge what is Literature?” Yes; and longer than that. But you can make provisional judgments as you go along. If the literary effect of Mrs. Stowe is at this century-end equivalent to 10x, and the literary effect of Catullus is equivalent to only 7x, you can still calculate on the future and defend your preference of Catullus—or of Mrs. Stowe. Nobody does, of course; but that is the only way to do it which will hold logic-water. Between any human mind, as agent, and the whole multitude of human minds, as objects, the sole fixed standard of measurement possible is a standard of how much force exerted, on how many, for how long. All the other standards shift with time, and place, and individuals, and circumstances.

So that, for humanity,

Literature is the human mind's effective manifestation in written language.

But, for the individual appraiser, there is a standard much more satisfactory, much more easily applied. Truth is—what you believe. Literature is—what you like. Admire the corollary: What I like is Literature.



IF Bacon were alive nowadays, with the wisdom attributed to him, he would realise that it is not worth while taking all knowledge for one's province—even if all knowledge permitted itself to be taken. We have reached a truer conception of the relation of finite to infinite than Bacon had; though our defaults and our fortunes keep life so far short of conception. Nothing profits the man who loses his own world, his only world, since we have no longer a theological soul to gain or a mythical heaven to confide in. The happy hunting-grounds are Here and Now—

*"Ah, make the most of what we yet may spend,
Before we too into the Dust descend;
Dust into Dust, and under Dust to lie,
Sans Wine, sans Song, sans Singer, and—sans end."*

Relevancy? Well, Literature is n't Life: it is merely Life's adjunct. And a well-spent life should get the fullest value out of every hour, every minute, every moment. I, for example, do not in the least desire to be discussing Literature just at present. It is a beautiful morning, with a zephyr-softened sun, and I want to Bask out on a Beach. With a Girl. One of Quinn's beaches and girls, for choice—

*"Pink feet and white ankles
On beaches of gold."*

(Omar's bread and wine and verses might be stowed under a shady rock, each awaiting its mood.) But the sun-and-zephyr morning is for me dying, dying—the unreturning hours hypnotised by Habit, whose trickling stream of accumulated impressions continually petrifies more and more brain-cells into reflex life-in-death; or mortgaged for bread and cheese and kisses, books and pictures, the hundred cravings that Thoreau repressed after the method of the savage who chopped his last toes to get his first boots on. Yet Thoreau tired of repression. Hermit-life at Walden was heroically beautiful;—and the hermit-hero gladly came home again after a couple of years. Why? "I do not think that I can tell. . . . Perhaps I wanted change. *There was a little stagnation, it may be, about two o'clock in the afternoon.*" And, maybe, in spite of the morning and the mood,

that bask would turn out less pleasant than this task. Literature is not always as attractive as the ideal Quinn girl, but it has fewer complications. Even Goethe found his bask-task rhythm of life falling into unexpected ruts.

Literature is one road to the Golden Age, one help to fix the date of the good time traditionally coming. And the object of existence on this earth is to have a good time.

The only human way of having a good time is to get emotions, impressions, sensations—the most and most varied and most intense sensations that your brain can give. Every human being tries instinctively to live the most intensely conscious kind of life that he is capable of living, and to remain conscious for the longest possible period. If Minerva sprang full-armed from the cradle, a wise man would deliberately set himself to improve his brain and its attached body to the utmost limit of the cosmic and hereditary tether. He would get his sensations as he extended his capacity for sensations, but he would always look forward to the time when his brain would be as keen and full as he could make it by normal vital processes.

Then, when his brain was full, he would start to absorb fully the world of sensations. Joy, grief, pleasure, pain, natural beauty, artistic beauty, the satisfaction of knowledge and the satisfaction of power,

love, fatherhood, peace, war, the light of dawn and the light of woman's eyes, books and friends, music and mystery ;—he would welcome them all to the limit of his power to receive them all, when considered together with his mortality, his chance of continuing to receive all in the most intense measure.

Deliberately he would milk the world of sensations into the bucket of his brain. And deliberately, if he understood that there was an intensity of sensation that transcended the normal power of his brain, he would artificially stimulate his brain, counting the cost, and realising that he was giving perhaps a day of normal life for a moment of life transcendent. Deliberately, a wise man would know excess and fatigue, intoxication and abstinence—for the pleasure of knowledge, and for the pleasure of excess and intoxication. And his motto would be, not "Never too much," but "Rarely too much"—"Too much" accepted with the knowledge of his power to refuse if he so willed ; "Too much" welcomed because, on a calculation of chances, "Too much" paid.

Of course many philosophies contradict this philosophy. Yet observe that every philosopher adopts this philosophy. Disciples may swallow the universe in a pill of dogma, but the teacher compounds the pill from tested sensations. Before the sheep can follow safely, the shepherd must know the path. Thus we see a long line of prophets, from Buddha to

Tolstoy, engaged in regenerating the race with the elderly morals drawn from their unregenerate youth, and urging the duty of life-renunciation upon men who have never known the pleasure of life-acceptance. That is not pretty Nature's way.

*"The world was made when a man was born.
He must taste for himself the forbidden springs.
He can never take warning from old-fashioned
things.*

*He must fight as a boy; he must drink as a youth.
He must kiss, he must love; he must swear to the
truth*

*Of the friend of his soul. He must laugh to scorn
The hint of deceit in a woman's eyes
That are clear as the wells of Paradise.*

*"And so he goes on till the world grows old;
Till his tongue has grown cautious, his heart has
grown cold;*

*Till the smile leaves his mouth and the ring leaves
his laugh,*

*And he shirks the bright headache you ask him to
quaff.*

*He grows formal with men, and with women polite,
And distrustful of both when they're out of his
sight.*

*Then he eats for his palate and drinks for his head,
And loves for his pleasure—and it's time he were
dead...."*

But, instead of dying, he lies down under a bo-tree or dons a peasant's smock, and distils delusive wisdom from the dregs of pomps and gaities that he can no longer enjoy.



EXPERIENCE teaches; but only one's own experience. To gain your gospel you must earn your gospel. When Mrs. Besant visited our land Australia, I remember asking her if she could have accepted Theosophy at the outset of her public career. She reflected, and doubted, and opined No; she had needed struggle: her life had fed a lamp to light her path.

Ponder the exemplary case of Annie Besant. To many people she is a puzzle, a paradox. They contrast the creed she forsook with the creed she embraced, neo-Materialism with neo-Theosophy; and they see that the two are absolutely antagonistic, mutually exclusive. Yet here is a woman who passes from one to the other "somewhat suddenly," in Bradlaugh's weighed and guarded phrase; almost without a struggle, as it appears to others. In a moment she turns her mind upside-down, astounding friends by the ease with which she quits long-cherished convictions, and becoming immediately no less ardent and obstinate a champion of her new

faith than of her old. The fruit of twenty years of strenuous thought tumbles at a single glance from the "brilliant eyes" of Madame Blavatsky. Admitting her honesty, her sanity, how possibly account for a revolution so radical? But consider. The very violence of the contradiction between Annie Besant the Materialist and Annie Besant the Theosophist implies a close bond of unity. For it is of the essence of things that likeness breeds opposition, unlikeness apposition. Extremes meet; complexity is nearest simplicity; and the universe rings with the chime of contraries. Perchance our paradox may sit on the inmost verge of harmony.

This much is always certain: the factors of such a problem are simply the every-day factors of action and re-action between organism and environment. In the mental world, as in the physical, there is no escape from the scientific law of necessity. Effect everywhere follows cause; and with a sufficient knowledge of principles and conditions we can trace effect or cause for the finite distance corresponding with finite capacity. Mrs. Besant acted as she did act simply because, being what she was, subject to the particular set of influences to which she was subject, she could not possibly act otherwise. The reasons for her conduct lie firstly in herself, secondly in her circumstances; and there is no room for any other reasons whatever. Study of her life should furnish the key

to her character. Now, her mental life experienced two great crises: her conversion from Materialism to Theosophy, and her previous conversion from Christianity to Materialism. Mrs. Besant's autobiography and other sources of information yield a wide induction of facts; and, applying deductively conclusions gained in other fields of enquiry, a theory leaps at once to light. The argument naturally takes syllogistic form.

Here is the major. The bent of man is intellectual; the bent of woman is emotional. This is a familiar philosophic statement justified by a large number of special sex-observations, and supported by common experience. Exceptions are sufficiently explained on the ground of hermaphroditic race-ancestry; and Weismann, one of the German naturalists whose thought and experiments are doing so much to mould current science, believes that the elements of both sexes are in every individual, the one class active, the other passive. Occasionally the predominance is not marked, and primary characters of one sex accompany secondary characters of the other in the same individual. Naturally, sex-generalisations apply particularly to those individuals in whom sex is most prominent, and in a lesser degree to those gathered closer to the median line of difference. But, generally speaking, though in savagery the sexes seem almost equally superstitious, as civilisation advances

the domain of faith becomes more and more clearly that of woman, and the domain of reason that of man. Women are everywhere the willing supporters of clericalism, long after men have emancipated themselves from its sway. They judge intuitively rather than rationally, arguing to what they wish to be rather than from what is. In popular language, they are ruled, not by their brains, but by their hearts.

Annie Besant is essentially a womanly woman. She would not wear men's clothes, like George Sand; or in her own person defy conventional morality, like George Eliot with Lewes. (The defence of the Knowlton pamphlet was a matter of principle that her feminine conscience justified.) Mrs. Besant's muliebrity is shown in a hundred things which we are used to consider manifestations of sex. She has been wife and mother; she is constitutionally anabolic, with rounded contours and small bones, needing slight nourishment; she is not above little coquetries of dress or little vanities of nature—as, for instance, her custom of being photographed in full face because her face in profile is not remarkable; “her voice was ever soft, gentle, and low—an excellent thing in woman”; she is tenacious of life—she suffered more and longer than Bradlaugh, yet Bradlaugh is dead and she is alive and well, probably partly because he was man and she woman; she is an interpreter, not a creator; she has the feminine quality of receptivity in a very

high degree, and the masculine quality of originality in a very low degree—Constance Naden, who had both, died young, and Mrs. Besant should live to be ninety, though nothing she has written will remain, and some things that Miss Naden wrote may be imperishable, for of such is the law of compensations. Add to this that, throughout her life—as a school-girl, praying to a sensuous Christ; as a mother, fighting with Death for her child; as a friend, faithful to the end to Charles Bradlaugh; as a thinker, yearning for some fixed basis of faith, some definite hope of immortality—Mrs. Besant has exemplified always the altruistic woman, a vessel of love and devotion, never the egoistic man; and our minor premiss may fairly stand as established.

The conclusion comes of itself. Mrs. Besant is ruled by her emotions, not by her intellect, keen though it be. Her sixteen years of Materialism were sixteen years of error, sixteen years of wandering from her proper path, sixteen years in which her real nature lay fettered and dormant. Only now is she on her true line, is she herself. The mystic promises of Theosophy satisfy her latent longings as the hard facts of Materialism never could satisfy them. Her intellect protests feebly, but is over-ruled. She has admitted that her belief in Theosophy is only partly a matter of intellectual conviction. Nevertheless, she believes wholly, because belief is a necessity of her nature. All

similar emotional characters make a similar choice. No half-measures are possible to them. Cardinal Newman, confronted with the dilemma, "Absolute Rome or absolute reason," after an agonising struggle chose Rome, because his emotions dominated his intellect. His brother chose reason, because his intellect dominated his emotions. Once made, the characteristic choice is final; and, as in both Cardinal Newman and Annie Besant, the intellect is set to work to justify the dogmas against which it fought. The process is curious, but perfectly intelligible; since it is essential to the peace of the mental force-majority that the demon doubt be excluded from the citadel of the Ego.

In Mrs. Besant's case, the years which the materialistic locust has eaten are easily accounted for. On the threshold of womanhood she made a most unhappy marriage with a clergyman who treated her cruelly. The consequences in mental distress and physical illness that all but killed her, accentuated her previous sense of the weakness of the Christian religion, and for a time completely subverted her nature. Had she married a man whom she could have loved and esteemed, she would have merged her views in his, sacrificed her individuality to his welfare, and lost her cavils in the glow of a deeper, but still orthodox faith. It is directly to her misery that we owe Mrs. Besant's magnificent life-work. The tortured heart re-acted

through the burning brain. Yet the eclipse of her inner self would have been but temporary had she not met Charles Bradlaugh. His influence confirmed the new bias so decisively that long years passed before it was gradually lost. Only when Mrs. Besant had passed middle age did she begin to feel lonely in her cold, unconsolatory atheism. The longing for human sympathy, besetting almost all men and women after youth has vanished, became in her an irresistible craving that philanthropic labour was unable to satisfy. Her heart regained its supremacy, and cried loudly for a warmer faith. Comte's "religion of humanity" could not suffice a character abhorrent of compromise. From unbelief she passed at a bound to belief. Yet her conversion to Theosophy, though it appeared sudden, was not the expression of a sudden change. It was preceded by a growing conviction that the materialistic philosophy was insufficient; it was preceded by the significant espousal of Socialism—as compared with Individualism, a more altruistic, more feminine, more emotional creed. And at last Annie Besant's life-stream, long diverted, took its natural course.

Mrs. Besant has written that she wishes to deserve this epitaph: *She tried to follow Truth*. She has deserved it. That the element of truth in Theosophy is overlaid with much fantastic error matters little. It is all truth to her, and the grandeur of her nature

glorifies her trivial creed. In effect, the intellectual belief of a good woman is comparatively of slight importance. We do not seek to know the botanical classification of a flower before enjoying its fragrance. Heroic spirits like Annie Besant, with all their frailties, are the salt of humanity. They are linked indissolubly with every generous deed, with every noble aspiration. They give courage in the present, and hope for the future. And here, on this bank and shoal of time of which alone there is any certitude, we are proud to yield them honour, whether our destiny be divinity or dust.



OF course there is no evidence that our destiny is divine, and little doubt that it is dusty; but that sentence finished itself with malice aforethought of Ruskin; and though I dislike it, I like it too well to alter. "Aforethought"—or felt rather, as a practised poetaster feels the shadow of a coming rhyme cast athwart the line he is penning. Ruskin preferred more artful assonances, invented harmonies that purr through his prose like a bride's snore through a honeymoon; and when he is good, he is very good indeed. But when he is bad he is horrid.

By a common fallacy, the obituary notices referred to Ruskin's death in his eighty-first year as causing a loss to English letters—which it plainly did not. It is Ruskin's works that establish his literary claim; and these remain uninfluenced by his death, as they would have been uninfluenced had he lagged another score of senile years—a superfluous veteran.

Ruskin the man was born rich, and he made a good and unselfish use of his riches. He was a liberal patron of art, spent much in hopeless attempts to create a social Eutopia, and gave, gave, gave to hundreds of men and public institutions that seemed to him deserving. His head was always in the clouds, like his writings. The best excuse for his dithyrambs is that he lived them. He was a literary Gladstone, an æsthetic Whitefield—a vast wave of emotion that dashed suddenly upon you from a vague expanse, retreated, and lost itself in the expanse again. The wave had no particular intellectual reason or justification; its cause was as obscure as its consequences; but it made a furious noise, shone with prismatic colours in the sunshine, and, in a general way of speaking, was an impressive natural object. When the wave fell back, you noticed the ground was a little wet.

The patch of moisture left by the Ruskin wave is rapidly drying. Few people nowadays pay intellectual attention to Ruskin. He was a fine emotional

force in his day and generation: for emotional people he is still an emotional force. But intellectually he does not count: he rarely did count.

How was it possible that Ruskin should count? He referred everything to the Glory of God. That was the end of all art, the aim of all human effort. Ruskin did not know what God is, or the Glory of God. All that he could do was to marry the Hebrew Scriptures with a Turner sunset, and decide that the Glory of God was the offspring. Then he described the offspring in an ecstasy of sonorous alliterations, and invited you to worship. You might worship; but you were doubtfully convinced. Was that the Glory of God? . . .

The Glory of God was the end, and the Glorification of Beauty was a means; but the Ruskin idea of Beauty was intellectually as incomprehensible as the Ruskin idea of God. For consider: Ruskin Beauty is divided into typical beauty and vital beauty. Typical beauty is that external quality of bodies which typifies some divine attribute. Vital beauty is the appearance of felicitous fulfilment of function in living things. The forms of typical beauty are—(1) Infinity, the type of divine incomprehensibility. (2) Unity, the type of divine comprehensiveness. (3) Repose, the type of divine permanence. (4) Symmetry, the type of divine justice. (5) Purity, the type of divine energy. (6) Moderation, the type

of government by law. The forms of vital beauty are——

But that will do. Imaginative gibberish, it seems? Imaginative gibberish it is. As far as theories of art were concerned, Ruskin wrote little but imaginative gibberish. When his theories did not come in the way he was a shrewd critic of art, and he was for long the chief appreciator of art in England. The emotion that he felt he could often give. His vision seems sometimes the inspired vision of a prophet: the eyes in that head-in-the-clouds saw things that ordinary men groped all their lives without perceiving; sometimes the angel-wing of Beauty did flash before Ruskin's eyes, and sometimes he could brilliantly describe a prismatic feather. But his mind moved in such a welter of words and images that he is always best when simplest. Ruskin's simplicity is the highest colour that style can take without degenerating into a rainbow poster. You must browse over his books as a horse browses over a meadow, welcoming what is succulent, and passing many an arid patch and many a patch too dangerously green and shining.

Ruskin wrote rhetorically, oratorically: his prose style is too often in the clouds where his head was. The energy of it is remarkable; the beauty of it is sometimes remarkable; it is frequently turgid, and its artifices are monotonous. When a thought can be ex-

pressed in two plain words you do not continually desiderate a glittering fifty. Every intelligent reader of Ruskin must pine for a diminished torrent and a greatly-diminished spout.

When Whistler commented in 1878 on the famous lawsuit Whistler versus Ruskin, he wrote that Ruskin's writing was art, and his art was unworthy his writing. Only the latter statement seemed debatable in 1878: nowadays we should debate both. The Ruskin wave has spent itself. And if you look closely, you may perceive that the ground is a little wet.



RUSKIN is an example of extense genius—the mind's sheet-lightning. For an example of intense genius, take the forked-lightning visions of Blake, blazing into the darkness of Tom o' Bedlam.

Genius, in the special sense, is not the spirit that watched over one's shoulder in ancient days. Not the individual's inborn faculty. But a type of mind associated with nervous instability, characterised by exceptional exaltation, capable of intellectual or emotional creation peculiarly high-pitched and (compared with talent's creation) dazzling. Moreau's "neurosis" (quoted by Havelock Ellis) meets the idea. Moreau regards the genius-neurosis as the synonym of

exaltation (not trouble or perturbation) of the intellectual faculties. "The word 'neurosis' would indicate a particular disposition of the faculties, a disposition still in part physiological, but overflowing those physiological limits." And Moreau presents a genealogical-tree with genius, insanity, and crime, among its branches; the common root being "the hereditary idiosyncratic nervous state."

Genius represents a fever of the brain—the brain itself being due to a localised fever or ferment of the ancestral organism. Every specialisation of function is accompanied by increased energy in the part specialised; and probably every physiological gain has had a pathological beginning—since a ferment in one part of the organism robs the common store of energy. Fancifully, therefore, life is a disease of the universe and man an evanescent pustule.

Genius is a disease of the pustule. Setting aside structural and chemical causes, we can consider it in effect as resulting from an abnormal series of cerebral vibrations. The abnormality is pathological, because it is gained at the expense of the life-sustaining forces of the organism.

You may construe genius-thought in terms of sound. It is known that the imperfect human ear hears only a limited class of the universe's sound-vibrations. When the sound travels too fast, or too slowly, the ear-drum will not respond to it—or will not

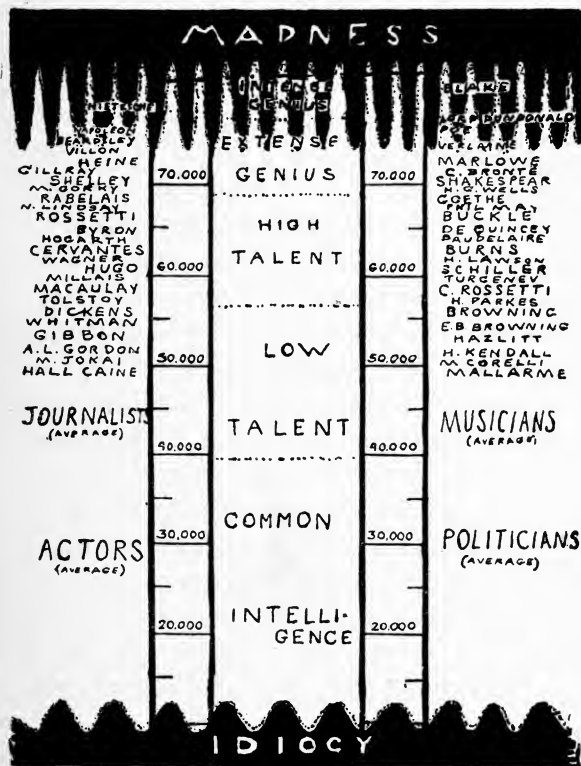
respond so as to influence the brain. And it is generally known that there is a difference in the response of human ears. Some people hear low notes, and not high; some hear high and not low. Some have an aural range in the centre of the ordinary scale, and hear neither low nor high. Anything less than about 16 vibrations per second, or more than about 38,000, the best of ears misses altogether.

So with minds. It is common to speak of slow wits, or quick. (Astonishing how many deep scientific truths lie hid in common talk, familiar expressions—the condensation of humanity's 200,000-year experience.) And the slowness, or quickness, refers to nothing but the vibration of disintegrating cerebral atoms. Doubtless an idiot's brain vibrates; but it is slower than the normal speed—the normal mind cannot hear it. Doubtless a maniac's vibrates; but it is faster than the normal speed—the normal mind cannot hear it.

From this construct your mind-measure or nousometer, as figured. Observe that the notation is arbitrary—comparative, not positive; since we cannot yet measure the speed of cerebral vibrations. Probably an exact observation of the phenomena of thought-transference will supply data.

Observe that the nousometer measures only speed of cerebral vibrations. So it measures intellectual rank in relation to genius, but it does not measure intellectual achievement. A high mind may be joined

NOUSOMETER



OF CEREBRAL VIBRATIONS.

easily with a low performance; since many things beside genius influence performance: for example—sex, age, circumstance, bodily constitution and health, brain convolution, number and kind of memories available for association of ideas, and so on. The intellectual achievement of H. G. Wells, for instance, must be classed far below the intellectual achievement of Shakespear; but it is possible to argue that H. G. Wells exhibits intrinsically the greater genius in the special sense—that his brain is hotter, that it vibrates faster, that it emits by flashes intenser light than Shakespear's brain.—Read this paragraph over again before you criticise the haphazard illustrations of the nousometer. I will put it another way:

Classification depends on quality, not on quantity of work. A 48,000-mind like Southey's or Trollope's may produce far more than a 68,000-mind like Chatterton's; and, by accumulation, Trollope's or Southey's work may have greater value, as a hundred shillings are worth more than one sovereign. But a sovereign is gold, and weight for weight worth much more than shillings.

Generally speaking, a mind's class is fixed by heredity, its place in the class by environment.

Classification must be based on individual estimate of results, until we find a means of measuring creation's reaction-time from stimulus. But it is likely that most men, at some times, have risen or fallen

from their ordinary class. (Great wits are sure to madness near allied, and no partitions do their minds divide.—Dryden, amended.)

A nousometer is in effect a brain-thermometer, since quicker vibrations mean more heat, and conversely. Hence the virtue of Stockton's pretty tale of the man who wrote well twice in his life—once in the delirium of first love, once in the ecstasy of fatherhood; for "love is a fever." Hence, too, the brilliant things written by alcohol, opium, and cocaine—even by tea and coffee: all "stimulants"—*i.e.*, things which make heat and hasten vibration or remove physical barriers to vibration. Hence the familiar relation of genius with the gout-fever, the phthisis-fever, and the rest.

Large heads tend to extension, small heads to intension of genius. But there is no relation between genius and head-size, since genius results from the rapid vibration of a particular set, by no means all, of the brain-atoms. Thus we find genius in music (*e.g.*, Paganini, Rubinstein), in sculpture and painting (*e.g.*, Michael Angelo), and in all the forms of human achievement—coincidentally, so far as the individual is concerned, with absolute idiocy in other forms.

Genius implies the abnormal development of one or more sets of faculties, the abnormally fast vibration of one or more series of brain-atoms, at the ex-

pense of the development and vibration-rate of other sets.

The mind, like the moon, has an unseen side—the side of the *minus* vibrations. If we only knew the poetry and nobility of Bedlam!

Thus genius is disease: its hypertrophy involves a corresponding atrophy. It is in the van of the curious evolutionary struggle-up. Death is no-vibration; the more conscious-vibrations the more Life; everything living pants for more Life; hence the continual effort for a faster vibration in the brain, the seat of consciousness. The continual hurling of some primeval 10,000-vibration ape's brain against its bars, the effort to think and know, produced a brain with a capacity in parts for 11,000 vibrations—the genius of his age. He taught others to think and know a little more and hurl a little harder, and presently 11,000-vibration brains—first in parts, then in the whole—became common. By this time the contemporary ape-genius was trying to get 13,000 vibrations out of a 12,000-vibration brain, and killing himself in the effort. But he showed the way up.

Genius is disease because its brain, or part of it, is worked continually beyond the normal margin of safety. If it could keep its head cool and its feet warm and work up to (say) 50,000 vibrations, it might live in health till ninety—but it would not be genius.

So when a noble notion comes along, genius straightway pumps all the available blood of its body into a corner of its brain, and takes that noble notion and moulds it into something nobler still—and its head is fire, and its feet are ice, and maybe it has cut five years off its life. This applies not alone to genius. If any man is content to stay on the vegetable level, and avoid emotional expenditure, he will probably live long and die "happy"—and for the sake of life lose all that makes life worth living. If he does anything—anything that costs—he shortens his life by so much. Say you start with 50 units of vitality transmutable into brain-vibrations. You may spend 25 units every day (regaining them in food and sleep), keep 25 in reserve, make "a fine old man" of yourself, and be "nobody" all the time. But if you want to be "somebody," to create something in any field of labour, or even to try to create something, you must spend 35 units in an hour and risk death or paralysis at age thirty or less. That is the condition which genius welcomes—because it must: it is built that way.

To make a genius is as easy—or as difficult—as making a cheese. You want from one parent a good-quality blood with plenty of red corpuscles: from the other a good-quality brain and a touch of nervous disease. If you desire much and consistent work you will need a good heart as well, to pump the

blood continuously to the head ; but for a few flashes a weak heart and stimulants suffice. The brain need not be what is called a good all-round brain—one or two extremely well-marked convolutions are all it needs. The more good convolutions you have, of course, the greater your genius (in extension, not necessarily in intension), but the supply of rich blood must be assured. The brain-quality is needed for the storage and reconstruction of impressions ; the blood is to enrich the atoms, which have to vibrate hard, and must live well. The effect of the nerve-disease is to increase the heat that is the vibratory force, or possibly to refine and attenuate the nervous molecules, so that motion can be more readily communicated. Doubtless, if the universe gives it time, humanity will go on quickening its normal rate of brain-vibration till the idiot of A.H. 250,000 (say) is intellectually level with the genius of to-day. By that time, geniuses will be propagated by Government in batches as required to suit the demands of the community. Genius will never propagate itself.



FOR illustration of intense genius, take the Brontë family. The son, Patrick, fell victim to alcohol; the surviving daughters were restrained by their sex from the highest accomplishment—since male stands for individual intensity, female for racial extension. But the genius-temperament was characteristically theirs: had they been boys, with lives not diverted to drink, or crime, or insanity, their artistic performance would have been imperishable.

Balzac's remarkable story of the Succubus may display one type of sex-sacrifice. Reverse the pose: and the story of the Cretan Minotaur and the maidens will display the other.

Most people know that sex has no place in the lowest organisms through which, in their own or kindred forms, we trace humanity's ancestry. Sex was life's happy later-thought; born, as we imagine, of the vital principle's constant struggle for intensity. Hence division in order to increase the shock of union, on the principle that atoms repelled to an intolerable point attract. The greater the polarity the stronger the magnet.

Doubtless sex has advantaged life on its way to the climax of intensity. Judged by any abstract standard, it has doubtfully advantaged the average individual form of life. So many pleasures: so many

pangs: and numerator cancels denominator into the sum as before. The life-result is intrinsically the same— x always—only it is x raised to humanity's power.

But whether sex be ill or good for the average human individual, for the exceptional individual it is almost always ill. He is pitilessly sacrificed to the race, her hopes of individual perpetuity to the perpetuation of the common life. Marriage is literally and physiologically a prior death—the individual's Calvary for the community's, the race's salvation. The Succubus still destroys the most brilliant of our youths: to the Minotaur is still delivered every year a tribute of the choicest of our maidens. Natural; and therefore well and right from the race's point of view: to mend, as men have tried, is generally to mar: yet how many bright aspirations, hopes of progress, mental triumphs, glorious poems, are trampled under the little pink feet of the army of babies.

The father of the Brontë family was a lusty Irishman, who wrote verses himself. The taint of degeneracy was in his blood: he showed insane tendencies, drank, was morbidly cruel to his wife. The story of the sufferings of that poor creature is one of the most affecting in literature. She was not strong, yet she seems to have been normally healthy, and in the pleasant Cornish sunshine of her birthplace might have

led a long and happy life. The Rev. Patrick Brontë, as curate-in-charge of Haworth, took her to a cheerless home on the border of a bleak Yorkshire moor, with a graveyard on two sides of the house, and not a soul near with whom she could have friendly intercourse. There he killed her by abuse; and, after producing six children in seven years, the tortured creature died of cancer supervening on physical exhaustion. The family were all weak and unhealthy, and the son was vicious. All were brilliantly clever. None lived to pass middle-age.

In the intervals of the mother's child-bearing the Rev. Patrick Brontë threw the babies' coloured shoes on the fire in a fit of temper, or cut her silk dress into shreds, or, when he was in a worse rage than usual, terrified her by firing off the pistol that night and day he kept constantly by him. "Coldness, neglect, tyranny, cruelty" are Wemyss Reid's words for the conduct of the master; "habitual dread" his phrase for the attitude of the slave. And the clerical brute actually upbraided her for having so many children! If the poor creature had turned and shot the Rev. Patrick Brontë with his own pistol, she would have done rather less than her duty to herself and her children and humanity. But she was only a woman, patient and uncomplaining; and, as she fades lingeringly out of existence in the agony of her cancer, we hear her asking gently now and again to be lifted up in bed that

she may watch the nurse cleaning the grate—"because you clean it as we used to clean it in my old home in Cornwall." One feels keenly the want of religious faith in circumstances like these. It would be such an irrational consolation to believe in a Deity who would toast the Rev. Patrick Brontë.

The brutal moral is obvious. To get a genius, mate a vigorous man, with tainted blood, to a highly-strung woman—or *vice versâ*—and produce a dozen children in a dozen years. If half of them live over puberty, you will certainly have a genius—perhaps two or three. The more closely you can tauten these conditions to breaking strain—the more nerve-disease you can get into your subjects without killing them too soon—the greater your genius is likely to be.

Maria Branwell (Mrs. Brontë) was married in 1812. She died in 1821, in her 39th year. The children were:

Maria,	died	1825,	aged	11.
Elizabeth	„	1825	„	10.
Patrick	„	1848	„	31.
Emily	„	1848	„	30.
Anne	„	1849	„	29.
Charlotte	„	1855	„	39.

What a sacrifice! And the old father, born in 1777, outlived them all. Truly, his life was nourished on their blood.

Clement Shorter's book of *Charlotte Brontë and her Circle*, which appears to have been undertaken partly with the object of whitewashing Charlotte's father and husband, succeeds in leaving them much as before. Another object was seemingly to decry the belief that Charlotte was a woman like the rest—as in the matter of M. Heger—and to give her the decent, respectable character suited to the daughter of one clergyman and the wife of another. The gist is a numerous collection of unpublished letters, of which Mrs. Gaskell skimmed the cream.

Shorter's whitewash does not even begin to make a white mark on Charlotte Brontë's father. It amounts to an assertion that Mrs. Gaskell took an untrustworthy servant's gossip; that another servant loved the Rev. Patrick; and that Charlotte's husband, the Rev. Arthur Nicholls, speaks highly of him. In a word, Shorter answers precise, detailed charges with side-issue generalities—and the charges remain. The Rev. Arthur also, Shorter says, has been much maligned. He has been called cold and unsympathetic, whereas Charlotte herself is in superlatives about his love and kindness. Here again the answer is inconclusive, for feminine self-deception is so common that we see daily any wife of any husband blind to qualities the very reverse of loveable.

There is no doubt that Charlotte, like her mother, was a martyr to her sex. But her marriage was more

merciful: it did not torture her—it killed her plump. She died nine months afterwards, of an illness connected with childbirth. Weak by constitution, in fact, and with such a history of headwork, she was unable to bear the strain of maternity. This is the penalty that women pay for extraordinary intellectual power. In proportion as is diverted to nourish the brain the blood that maternity demands elsewhere, the result is sterility, as in the case of George Eliot, or death, as in the case of Charlotte Brontë. When Charlotte married at age thirty-eight she was in fair health, and had before her perhaps half her career in literature. She threw away life and fame because she could not resist the importunities of a man whom she states expressly that she did not love; and so one of the most gifted geniuses of her century was sacrificed in endeavouring to perform an act of reproduction achieved a dozen times over by the commonest female clod among her husband's parishioners.

The Rev. Arthur Nicholls was a substantial Scotchman—selfish, of cold manners, rather stubborn. His character commanded respect, but his disposition did not invite affection. He was not at all the man of Charlotte's dreams, as she candidly avows. Why, then, did she marry him? For a complexity of reasons. In the first place, she was thirty-eight, and lonely, and heartsick, and tired of the sombre, drinking, pistol-shooting father. In the second place, the

Rev. Arthur looked like a sincere lover : he wept, grew visibly thinner, and would take no refusal. Charlotte could not help being impressed : surely with such a man, she thought, if with any, she would find happiness. Perhaps the father's bitter opposition to the match helped to bias Charlotte in favour of it. And finally, she looked forward into the loveless, lonely future, and—in great ignorance of what marriage meant, yet with many intellectual misgivings—decided to take the leap.

There is no reason to think that the Rev. Arthur treated his wife otherwise than kindly. Like many others of his type, he was a very decent fellow as long as he got his own way, and Charlotte gave him his own way. Her head could never have approved of him ; but her heart began to regard him with affection that deepened into something like love. The sex-awakening of a woman of thirty-eight is apt to produce a passion which, if it be fairly treated, gilds the marital horizon for some time. As the years pass, the Sleeping Beauties grow more and more inclined to overlook small personal objections to the Princes who burst through the hedge of briars. Charlotte's married life had not time to become unhappy. When illness took her, her husband made a kind and devoted nurse—which was quite in character ; and when she died he returned to keep company with her old father until the old father died in his turn. Those six years of

voluntary martyrdom ought to wipe out the memory of the deficiencies of the Rev. Arthur Nicholls—for which, in any case, he cannot positively be blamed.

Compare the Brontë novels with Lytton's, for example, and you get at its keenest the striking contrast between genius and talent. Lytton's works are constructed by rule and measure according to the best principles of art. They charm and attract, but rarely influence or stimulate. Charlotte Brontë, the chief of the three sisters who lived to write, has a much more limited scope, much less learning and skill; but her passionate force is irresistible. Lytton's characters are merely figures in a picture—correctly drawn, admirably coloured, and arranged according to the best theories of proportion and perspective. Charlotte Brontë's live. They are real personages—we are convinced of it—painted with the writer's life-blood, uttering with stress and pang the thoughts that agitate and overwhelm her.

These things, among others, are proofs that literature is made on physiological principles; and that a family doctor—who can point to one page, and say, "Scrofula!" to another, "Eupepsia!" and to a third, "Phthisis!"—should be easily best of literary critics.

BUT always, when he deals with women, he will find his critical basis in their history of satisfaction or mortification of sex-instincts. Charlotte Brontë, Jean Ingelow, George Eliot, Elizabeth Browning, Christina Rossetti, and the others: before one considers them as writers one must consider them as women. You cannot dissociate their books from their lives. Their words cannot give the reader half the meaning and emotion that the writers wished to express: words are poor symbols of breathing humanity. Literature is a stream from Life's source, a porch of Life's temple: and fully to appreciate it we must reach the source and stand within the shrine.

Ob. JEAN INGELOW, POET AND AUTHOR, AGED 77.

It is likely that this other-day's announcement drew from many readers a mere mild "Who was she?"—the utterance of incurious wonder at a name now little more than a literary memory. When Laureate Tennyson died, indeed, there was found one lauder of past time who exhorted Lord Salisbury to remember merit proved and "give the wreath to Ingelow." But the call went echoless. Even in England, her home, Jean Ingelow has been all but forgotten in the notoriety of new reputations. Yet the first volume of the '88 edition of her verses was reprinted from the twenty-third edition....and how many

of the names so glib upon our lips will be printed in a third?

Jean Ingelow never married; and her poems are her children. She wrote prose also, but her stories are undistinguished. For good prose—strong, fibrous, pregnant prose—intellect and knowledge are necessary; and Jean Ingelow had neither. She was essentially feminine, emotional—a lute with a single string. “All the secret that many, nay, most women have to tell, is—*I love you.*” The phrase is Dr. Holmes’s; and throughout his work the idea recurs continually. He never ceased grieving at the tragedy of “our dear sisters, the unloved”—surely the saddest, the most pitiful of all civilisation’s tragedies. And yet, and yet. . . .

Here are Jean Ingelow’s poems—her maiden longings, her mother yearnings, her romance, passion, devotion, her very life. “Earthlier happy is the rose distilled”; but in distillation is lost how much of the fragrance that the rose withering on the virgin thorn may shed to the blessing of humanity! “These women,” says Bartle Massey, “they’ve got no headpieces to nourish, and so their food runs either to fat or to brats.” Surely George Eliot, of all women, knew better than her creature the high-strung woman’s alternative—she who upon celibacy and sterility built a pyramid of literary work rarely matched by her sex. Solid old Bacon certainly knew better. . . . “the best

works, and of greatest merit for the public, have proceeded from the unmarried and childless men, which, both in affection and means, have married and endowed the public. . . . A single life doth well with churchmen, for charity will hardly water the ground where it must first fill a pool." "Men"—and women. "Charity"—and virility, muliebrity, vitality—the life-energy that is talent's staple, genius's sustainer. "A virtuous woman is a crown to her husband"; and but for her husband she might have been a crown to her generation, country, race. So Jean Ingelow, the potential imbecile-propagator of a dozen sturdy English pumpkinheads, pressed her lonely breast against the thorn, and sang thrillingly, and sadly, and very tenderly. And it is quite beyond question that she would have given all her twenty-four editions for one red, curly, commonplace baby.

Tenderness is the chief characteristic of Jean Ingelow's matter; melody, of her style. She is as comforting to a woman as Matthew Arnold to a man. Matthew titillates the intellect and the ear; Jean, the ear and the emotions. Positively and absolutely, Matthew Arnold is not a poet of the highest rank; though one may read him with more pleasure than one reads poets of the highest rank. Positively and absolutely, Jean Ingelow's poems are of second-rate merit, with lapses to third-rate and beyond. She has considerable power over rhyme and rhythm, and occasional

touches of fine verbal felicity; but her thought is generally shallow or weak, and sense is often sacrificed to sound. Her temptations to a parodist like Calverley were irresistible. Yet even in the youthful and semi-hysterical "Divided" there were touches of poetic phrase and sentiment that brilliant Calverley could never compass. Touches like

A little piping of leaf-hid birds....

Or

He prays, "Come over,"—I may not follow;

I cry, "Return"—but he cannot come:

We speak, we laugh, but with voices hollow;

Our hands are hanging, our hearts are numb.

Do those lines concentrate Jean Ingelow's own life-tragedy?

The truth is that minds like Calverley's and Jean Ingelow's move on different planes, and a dweller on each seems often unintelligible and absurd from the other. Calverley glowed with cold intellect—one of his friends says "he seemed literally to lighten on a subject." The expression is crucial; for Calverley is to Jean Ingelow as an electric-light to a fire, illuminating where she warms. And, if you choose, you can talk of "mere illumination" or "mere warmth," just as a biased painter speaks of "mere form" or "mere colour." But it is better to recognise that colour is good and form is good, that warmth is good and light

is good, that female is good and male is good—each in its special way and degree.

Calverley saw things so clearly that he always found the just word, and expressed precisely what he felt. Jean Ingelow felt things so strongly that her sense of words was obscured, and often she suggests more than she can express. Yet Jean Ingelow was a poet, and Calverley a very clever writer of verses. He had the better vision; but her vision is instinct, and by dint of feeling keenly she occasionally saw far more clearly even than he did. The *x*-rays are invisible, but they penetrate where light-rays cannot. And, despite science, when a gouty toe is in the purple of condition there is no barometer like a gouty toe.

Woman is the fragrant sex; but she loses her fragrance in literature. Anthony Trollope used to say that even when he was grey and sixty his heart leapt to the music of a petticoat. It is rare, in turning over a woman's book, to hear more than the rustle of the leaves. "Abandon sex!" is the legend over the gates of the literary Inferno. In life, when Blue-Stockings competes for male applause with Bright-Eyes, Bright-Eyes is a romping winner. She takes the apple from every decent Paris under forty-five, and from many an indecent Paris over. But in literature . . . there are compensations. You cannot see Bright-Eyes smiling over her undistributed middle, or pass bathos when all's unwell in the thrill of a tender fan-

tap. And Blue-Stockings prims her legs severely, and marches to victory in an all-askew last year's gown with the trimming off one sleeve, and a large stain in front where she spilt her coffee that agitated midnight when she had the triumphal idea about Goethe.

Jean Ingelow can no more than other women get all her life-fragrance into her literature ; but she gets a little. In "The High Tide on the Coast of Lincolnshire" there is a melancholy savour, a crooning pathos of sound and cadence, that give the true trembling-Madonna's-mouth emotion—ecstasy on the edge of utterance. (There is something of the same effect, with a stronger vibration, in David's lament ; "O my son Absolom, my son, my son Absolom!"—thanks to the good luck that gave the most beautiful man in Israel the most beautiful name ; for there is no poetry in "O my son Mahershalalhashbaz, my son, my son Mahershalalhashbaz!")

In "The High Tide," "Echo and the Ferry," and "The Letter L"—a third piece rather stronger than the other two, and hardly less sweet—Jean Ingelow is felt at her best. But there are several poems and a hundred verses and phrases that make her work worth knowing and treasuring : as for example—

*Men must die—one dies by day, and near him moans
his mother ;
They dig his grave, tread it down, and go from it
full loth ;*

*And one dies about the midnight, and the wind
moans, and no other,
And the snows give him a burial—and God loves
them both.*

*The first hath no advantage—it shall not soothe his
slumber*

*That a lock of his brown hair his father aye shall
keep;*

*For the last, he nothing grudgeth, it shall nought his
quiet cumber*

That in a golden mesh of his callow eaglets sleep.

(Essentially a stale, easy sentiment; but where set
more sonorously and forcibly?)

Grand is the leisure of the earth!

(How many Le Galliennes would it take to compose
an august line like that?)

She gives her happy myriads birth

And after harvest fears not dearth,

But goes to sleep in snow-wreaths dim.

Again—

The lookings onward of the race before

It had a past to make it look behind;

Its reverent wonder, and its doubting sore,

Its adoration blind.

The thunder of its war-songs, and the glow

Of chants to freedom by the old-world sung;

The sweet love-cadences that long ago

Dropped from the old-world tongue.

(Listen to the long vowels trumpeting! Jean Ingelow had mastered the tone-poet's first-lesson: Consider the long vowels, how they go; and notice what a mean fellow is short-vowelled, swiftly-said Solomon, shorn of the slow magnificence of "all his glory.")

*Here was a man familiar with fair heights
That poets climb. Upon his peace the tears
And troubles of our race deep inroads made,
Yet life was sweet to him, he kept his heart
At home. Who saw his wife, might well have
thought—*

*'God loves this man. He chose a wife for him—
The true one.' O sweet eyes, that seem to live,
I know so much of you, tell me the rest!
Eyes full of fatherhood and tender care
For small, young children. . . .*

And again—

*Ecstatic chirp of winged thing,
Or bubbling of the water-spring,
Are sounds that more than silence bring
Itself and its delightsomeness.*

So on, and on, through the homely old themes of love, and life, and death, Jean Ingelow moves, singing her life-story better than all but a rare few of us. I commend her scattered books to the publishers of "selected editions" in single volumes.

THIS seems a good place to complain of women writers—not that they lack humour: that is trite; nor that the fights are the weakest passages of their historical novels: since one is not expected to read their historical novels; but—that they do not make love well, and that they arrange death badly.

The male poet loves detail in his amorous couplets; but why is the female, at times quite as amorous, so much more vague and general in her epithets? It isn't in character. Woman, the natural observer, who notes with microscopic eye the minutest triviality of garb or wearer, must see all the good and bad points of her lovers: why doesn't she dilate on them in print as her lovers dilate on hers? Certainly she does not: Sappho's Phaon is merely an indistinct lump of loveliness, while Catullus scrutinises Lesbia's teeth with the anxiety of a horse-dealer. "A mouth like a Gallic beagle," he says one lady had. Modern Sapphos are content to describe their heroes as being "beautiful as a young Greek god," and so on; but they never specify anything beautiful about him except his clothes, or his nose, or some such irrelevancy. Even Mrs. Raggles, of the U.S., whom a U.S. paper praises for the taste implied in her remark after visiting *Europe*: "Well, I've seen the Apollo Belvideer an' I've seen Raggles, an' gimme Raggles!"—even this exponent of culture didn't mention wherein lay Raggles's

preëminence. Yet the most superficial study of Swinburne (say) will show any average woman what the average man prizes her for. You bet that even Raggles, sitting spitting at the stove in an Arizona saloon, and talking heifer to the boys, would give them a remarkably definite picture of the excellences of his old girl. Now, since the literary and poetic Male puts everything in writing, as it were, why does the ditto Female play her accepted instincts false in this one particular? Why doesn't she retaliate, and compensate, and elaborate? The world is full up and running over with the poetry of woman's eyes and limbs: one desires to hear the other side.

Literature, of course, ought to fascinate at the furthest whisper of a sex-cell union. There is a good book, and an easy one, waiting to be made with the title *How it is Done; or, Different Ideas on a Delicate Subject*. Agnes Stevens has attempted something of the kind in *How Men Propose*; but she is a wooden chooser of romances, she supplies no sympathetic commentary, and she mixes her authors horribly. A better compiler would have taken Meredith (say) as a whole, and distilled the essence of his exquisite love-passages; then gone to Dickens, and Thackeray, and Lever, and the rest; then over the channel and across the border to Deutschland, and round to America, and so everywhere—an Ariel among the blossoms of Love's literary garden. This

isn't the order, to be sure: you must go by periods, and schools, and nations; but there waits the book.

Not that the compiler would reap much Australian harvest. "Rolf Boldrewood" doesn't know in the least how it is done; Marcus Clarke doubtless knew, but he doesn't tell; and even among the women, Ethel Turner, from whom better things were expected, merely brings Meg in with an exquisite flush and dewy eyes after it's all over. Louise Mack is more intelligent. This is Louise Mack:

He realised that Jean was in his arms, that her head lay against his breast, and that his safety was of strange account to her. . . . And he put one hand under her chin, and turned her face a little, and caught one brief glimpse of her eyes.

"Jean, Jean, tell me, tell me. You love me."

Her head fell back a little, and all the beauty of her face was under his gaze, the eyes with a strange new look in them. The little babyish curls of hair, the pure soft skin, the tender half-smiling mouth.

"You love me," said Musgrave.

"I did n't know," said Jean childishly. She caught her breath in a little sob.

"My saint, my saint," he was whispering.

He bent his head nearer, nearer. And then through the fog two lovers kissed each other for the sweet first time.

This has very fair cloy for a young author, and there is more where Jean goes on "kissing his hair, with her arms round his neck, and his head so close

against her heart that the little paste buttons of her gown were cutting into his cheek." Decidedly, Jean should have pasted on her wall (instead of "*Nulla dies sine linea*") "*Every gown sine buttons*"; also, "*Toujours girl sans bones*." There is much to be said for "*l'admirable beauté de seize ans, l'expression angélique de cet âge, l'âme timide et neuve, qui consacre à l'objet de son choix les premiers sentiments qu'elle ait jamais éprouvés,*" but, as a rule, *Seize-Ans* in Australia is shockingly unpractical and squealy, and careless how the buttons stick into you. If N.S.W. Education Department will add another subject to its girls' High-School curriculum (Jean seems to have been a High-School girl) I am ready with a professor. He might be called M. le Professeur des Petits Soins de S'Amouracher.

Jane Eyre is one of the English heroines who explain most intelligently how it is done. Jean is represented as plain and unattractive, but she nevertheless manages to secure three proposals. True that two are from the same man, and the third from a missionary who does not love her—still, proposals. Jane is a most matter-of-fact girl, and occupies page after page with logical pros and cons before she gives her final decision. But here is the pith of her first pop:

"Jane, accept me quickly," added Mr. Rochester, wildly. "Say Edward—[how badly men always want

the girl to say Edward !] —give me my name—Edward—I will marry you.”

“Are you in earnest?—Do you truly love me?—Do you sincerely wish me to be your wife?” [This is the practical kind of girl that our High-Schools should nourish.]

“I do; and if an oath is necessary to satisfy you, I swear it.”

“Then, sir, I will marry you.” [Jane’s doubts are banished by the oath—evidently she believes in “lovers’ oaths.”]

“Edward ! [still harping on the same point] [my little wife !”

“Dear Edward !” [Ah !]

“Come to me—come to me entirely now,” [note the “now”] said he ; and added, in his deepest tone, speaking in my ear as his cheek was laid on mine, “Make my happiness—I will make yours.”

“God pardon me !” he subjoined ere long ; “and man meddle not with me : I have her, and will hold her.”

“There is no one to meddle, sir. I have no kindred to interfere.”

“No—that is the best of it,” he said. [Had Rochester’s prescient mind foreboded a mother-in-law ?]

The scene begins, by the way, when Rochester calls Jane to come and look at a big moth. What an aid to love is the fascinating sport of insect-catching ! They discuss the moth for a time—then a nightingale comes and sings to them—then Jane weeps—then the rain falls. They get wet through, which cools their ardour, and they go to bed. It has all happened in

an orchard at the foot of a horse-chestnut tree: time, twelve o'clock at night. Next morning Jane is informed "that the great horse-chestnut at the bottom of the orchard had been struck by lightning in the night, and half of it split away." No wonder!

Yet Jane doesn't get married, after all. She is led to the altar, but the marriage is stopped by a brother of the mad first wife whom Rochester keeps locked up. Jane flees, and is protected by a clergyman about to go as a missionary to India, "who wants a wife to be his helpmeet and fellow-labourer." He does not love Jane—not the least bit in the world; in fact, he loves another girl devotedly; but he thinks Jane would make the better missionary. He wants her "as a conductress of Indian schools, and a helper amongst Indian women." Jane respectfully declines this thankless billet, and presently gets on with the old love again. After more argument, and any amount of unnecessary verbiage, the third proposal comes along:

"Jane," said Mr. Rochester, "I want a wife."

"Do you, sir?"

"Yes; is it news to you?"

"Of course; you said nothing about it before."

"Is it unwelcome news?"

"That depends on circumstances, sir—or your choice."

"Which you shall make for me, Jane. I will abide by your decision."

"Choose then, sir—*her who loves you best.*"

"I will at least choose—*her I love best.* Jane, will you marry me?"

"Yes, sir." [This promptness is worthy all praise.]

"A poor blind man, whom you will have to lead about by the hand?"

"Yes, sir."

"A crippled man, twenty years older than you, whom you will have to wait on?"

"Yes, sir."

"Truly, Jane."

"Most truly, sir."

"Oh, my darling! God bless and reward you!"

Tolerable, tolerable; yet on reconsideration Jane seems a little too matter-of-fact. Perhaps a shade more intoxication is desirable—of the kind that is made in France. Voici, par exemple:—

La réduction de l'univers à un seul être, la dilatation d'un seul être jusqu'à Dieu, voilà l'amour.

O printemps! tu es une lettre qui je lui écris.

Oh! être couchés côte à côte dans le même tombeau la main dans la main, et de temps en temps, dans les ténèbres, nous caresser doucement un doigt, cela suffirait à mon éternité.

S'il n'y avait pas quelqu'un qui aime, le soleil s'éteindrait.

These are extracts from the love-letter that Marius puts under the stone for Cosette, what time l'idylle

Rue-Plumet lightens for a moment the gloom of "Les Misérables." And then the meeting! Poor Marius is pale and hungry-looking, and has lost his hat. Cosette holds on to a tree to keep herself from falling, while Marius explains himself in an impassioned oration. "Si vous saviez! je vous adore, moi."

Let one of Mr. Routledge's intelligent translators continue:—

"Do I offend you?" said Marius.

"Oh, my mother!" said Cosette. ["Que diable allait-elle faire dans cette galère?"]

And she sank down as if she were dying. He seized her in his arms, and pressed her to his heart, not knowing what he did. He supported her while himself tottering. He felt as if his head were full of smoke(!); flashes passed between his eyelashes; his ideas left him, and it seemed to him as if he were accomplishing a religious act, and yet committing a profanation. [Then there is omitted the little bit that proves Hugo a Frenchman—Du reste, il n'avait pas le moindre désir de cette femme ravissante dont il sentait la forme contre sa poitrine—modest translator!]

She took his hand and laid it on her heart; he felt his letter there and stammered:

"You love me then?"

She answered in so low a voice that it was almost an inaudible breath:

"Silence! you know I do."

And she hid her blushing face in the chest [dans le sein—O humorous translator!] of the proud and intoxicated young man. He fell on the bench, and she

by his side. They no longer found words, and the stars were beginning to twinkle. How came it that their lips met? How comes it that the birds sing, the snow melts, the rose opens, May bursts into life, and the dawn grows white behind the black trees on the rustling tops of the hills? [This is the sort of thing we want from Australian writers.] One kiss, and that was all; both trembled and gazed at each other in the darkness with flashing eyes. [Ah, Victor knew!]

Then they take hands without knowing it, and *de temps en temps le genou de Marius touchait le genou de Cosette, et tous deux frémissaient*, and par intervalles Cosette *bégayait une parole—son âme tremblait à ses lèvres comme une goutte de rosée à une fleur*. Decidedly, Hugo was a great man. And by-and-by, when they are about to be parted, Cosette weeps for more than two hours by the side of Marius *qui songeait*; and finally, "without saying a word, both fell into each other's arms without noticing that their lips were joined together, while their upraised eyes, overflowing with ecstasy, contemplated the stars." An interesting embrace: readers may practise it for themselves. Just try: lips joined, and look at the stars.



THE other side of the complaint may be buttressed by reference to George Eliot. I have read somewhere that George Eliot was "a fiery soul." Perhaps that is the reason she was never at home in the water. I suspect she could not swim; and when the characters in her novels go boating she is always at sea—even if they are only sculling on a river.

This is a pity, for she drowns heroes and heroines with as little compunction as if they were kittens. I complain that they do not drown naturally. One does not object to Dunstan Cass, in *Silas Marner*, walking into the stone-pit to perish; although you think that he, a boy bred in the neighbourhood, should have had more sense. Nor do I care to dispute about probabilities when Adam Bede finds his father in the Willow Brook. But these are simple cases, which it would be hard to bungle if one tried. It is when she attempts complex drownings that we feel George Eliot's deficiencies.

For example, Tito's death in *Romola* is not well done. A fine swimmer, as he is said to be, would not get exhausted in a few minutes. In a river, he could swim five or possibly ten miles with a warm current. Or he could simply drift along. No swimmer would persevere to exhaustion in such a case. He would either make for the shore when he grew tired,

or turn on his back and float. If Tito had his mail-coat on I could understand it, but "he no longer wore his armour." Of course it is necessary for him to become exhausted, or he would not fall a prey to Baldassarre. But machine-gods should confine themselves to the land, and not meddle with people in the water. I am a pretty fair swimmer myself, and in the name of Leander, Byron, Cavill, Self and Co., I protest against such unwarrantable catastrophes. Were Tito alive, he would protest too. If lady novelists think a fellow gets exhausted after swimming a few hundred yards in a river, with the stream, lady novelists must be taught differently.

Then, as to the fate of Tom and Maggie Tulliver, one's indignation is excusably warm. If Tom could not manage the boat so as to avoid being stove in, he should have given the sculls to his sister. I am positive Maggie would have saved both lives, in spite of the conduct of the floating *débris*, which is truly extraordinary. To begin with, buildings are not usually broken into "huge fragments" by a slowly-rising flood. If they float away at all, they float bodily. Nor do "huge fragments make one wide mass across the stream." Variations of the current prevent that. And even supposing that Tom was in the way of a mass of huge fragments, carried along at a speed of six miles an hour—a sufficient estimate under the circumstances—how was he overtaken when his boat was

presumably drifting just as fast? What hindered him from turning the boat's head and pulling away with the current? Or why did he not endeavour to obtain footing on a "huge fragment"? Sailors, in a collision, have leaped upon the bows of an approaching vessel, or upon an iceberg. The picture in my copy of *The Mill on the Floss* shows the approach of a "huge fragment" which looks like part of the foundation of a crane. One of Tom's sculls is gone, and he has stopped pulling. He is standing up in the boat, a light 15ft. skiff, clasping Maggie in his arms and waiting for annihilation. What I should do, in his place, would be to make the skiff fast to a ring-bolt on the "huge fragment" (there is one convenient in the picture) and float downstream looking for something to turn up. No doubt Maggie would have done this had not her brother flurried her. It is provoking to see two young people drowned so foolishly. I do not regret Tom much, but Maggie was a girl in a thousand.

The manner of Grandcourt's taking-off in *Daniel Deronda* is equally unsatisfactory. I do not grieve for Grandcourt any more than for Tom, but he was not a bad fellow at bottom. There was no cant about him, at all events; and Gwendolen is rather worse off when he goes, since she is torn by remorse, and Deronda will have nothing to do with her. In any case, the affair is clumsily managed. I have never

sailed a boat in the Gulf of Genoa, so I do not know what the wind is like ; but Grandcourt was probably trying to jibe when a puff came. This would agree with Gwendolen's statement: "I don't know how it was—he was turning the sail—there was a gust—he was struck." The fishermen thought maybe he had been knocked overboard by the flapping of the sail while putting about ; but this is hardly likely. If he carried a boom, and handled the boat very carelessly, he might have been swung overboard, but where was Gwendolen sitting that she wasn't hit too? And, even if the boat jibed, would Grandcourt be "swept over" without her capsizing? Then what was he about to drown so quickly? Gwendolen was not sure that he could swim ; but is it probable that an English country gentleman like Grandcourt had never learnt? Would he be likely to take his wife out sailing if he could not swim? Deronda thought "he must have been seized with cramp," but people do not get cramp the minute they fall into water ; and even if they do, and can swim, they keep afloat. Of course I would like to know what kind of boat Grandcourt hired before pronouncing a decided opinion ; but the accident is certainly mysterious.

I do not go so far as to say that George Eliot's works are entirely spoilt by her failure to appreciate these considerations ; but, as a swimmer, I would be much better pleased had Tito floated five or six miles

down the river, then landed fresh as paint and killed Baldassarre after a brief struggle ; or if Tom Tulliver had swum ashore on his back with Maggie on his arm. They had plenty of time to take off any clothes that encumbered them ; and Tom, as a miller's son, who had doubtless bathed in the mill-pool as soon as he could walk, should have been easily equal to such a feat. Grandcourt ought to have capsized the boat and supported Gwendolen in the water till help came, when her feelings towards him would have undergone a complete change, and they would have lived happily together. Of course, we must take our author as we find her ; but I am astonished that Lewes, with all his versatility, did not know enough to set his wife right. One thing is plain ; we should, for the sake of future lady novelists, teach all our girls to swim. The only alternative is to insist that doomed personages be removed by poison or the cord.



IT would be interesting to traverse the field of fiction and show the singular force of the death-climax where the plan permits it to be used. (In panoramic novels, like *Vanity Fair* or *Middlemarch*, it cannot be used with advantage ; and the ending in such novels, if you consider it separately, is the weakest part of the book.) One might refer to the magni-

ficent close of *Beauchamp's Career*, with the picture of the great Lord Romfrey thundering on that black river-side where the idealist threw his life away for an insignificant bit of mudbank humanity. Then there is *The Story of an African Farm*, with worn-out Waldo sleeping into death—Em bringing him milk as the chickens climb about him: "He will wake soon and be glad of it"—and the superb clinching sentence, "But the chickens were wiser." (This though Olive Schreiner in her preface repudiates "the stage method," and professes merely to paint life: her artistic sense impels her to select from life the dramatic climax which she disavows.) And there is the still more thrilling crisis of *Madame Bovary*, where the impression is intensified by contrast between the miserable woman on her deathbed and the miserable woman trolling a gay song beneath the window.

And so on.

Literature is a more or less ideal representation of life; and death is the natural and effective literary-climax because it is the natural and effective life-climax. When the literary artificer stops short of "death," the reader feels there is still something to be said. Even children will meet "So they married and lived happily ever after" with "But how did they live happily ever after? and what did they die of?"—and adult-age is more exacting. Marriage ends the movement, but death ends the music; and the intel-

ligence, like the ear, rests unsatisfied with a final pause in the middle of the bar. Injudicious workmen even go past death—into heaven or hell; but heaven and hell are anti-climaxes, though useful in humorous verse. Serious verse or prose they weaken: the average person does not picture them as clearly and inevitably as he pictures death; and the power* of an artistic stimulus depends, of course, upon the audience's capacity for response.

Thus Paterson's comic rhyme of "Old Pardon, the Son of Reprieve," closes effectively with a picture of Pardon careering round celestial courses; but Lawson's tragic rhyme of "Marshall's Mate" closes ineffectively by translating the hero to

... *"that Loving, Laughing Land where life is
fresh and clean—*

*Where the rivers flow all summer, and the grass is
always green."*

The idea is staled, anyway; and even a good thing is artistically spoiled by staleness—by the want of that "continual slight novelty" which divides creation from imitation. And the idea is inartistically used because it drops the mind more or less abruptly from the climax of a strongly-pictured, thoroughly-realised

* Not the *value*; we measure *power* by the standard of actual accomplishment, and *value* by the standard of possible accomplishment.

tragedy to the anti-climax of a dimly-realised, rather-weakly-pictured "pretty ending." Where his tragic effect is still greater, as in "Out Back," Lawson himself can see that taking it to heaven would spoil it: it is only occasionally that his feminine-elements obscure his male vision.

Apropos the *Bovary* ending. There is somewhere in French the story of a woman to whom came a man who had eaten of the insane Amor-root that takes the reason prisoner. She stroked his hand soothingly, and told him that she would be a sister to him, and he might kiss her on the cheek (in the usual considerate feminine way). When the man went away and thought it over, he laughed mirthlessly—he had eaten a good deal of root, and the woman's conduct impressed him like the ancient story of the Macquarie-street lady who rushed out with a bedroom-jug to extinguish the Garden Palace fire. In the next chapter, the man happens to mention that he laughed; and the woman is shocked. "You laughed!" she says. Our point is concealed in the woman's inability to conceive a depth of tragedy in that laugh. So the average woman fails to realise that the best of what pathos there is in Fildes's melodramatic picture of *The Widower* is brought by contrast between the grief of the father and elder child and the glee of the younger children. The feminine mind always wants its moods arranged tidily, like doormats and anti-

macassars, according to the conventional notion of that dubious proverb, "A place for everything, and everything in its place."

For light upon the subject see De Quincey's essay "On the Knocking at the Gate in *Macbeth*," with the pregnant sentence: "All action in any direction is best expounded, measured, and made apprehensible by reaction." Compare Amaranth in *The Green Carnation*, which by no means fails in truth by succeeding in being paradoxical: "The highest humour often moves me to tears. . . . The highest comedy verges upon tragedy, just as the keenest edge of tragedy is often tempered by a subtle humour. Our minds are shot with moods as a fabric is shot with colours, and our moods often seem inappropriate. Everything that is true is inappropriate." . . . "I know," said Reggie Hastings. "That is why I laughed at my brother's funeral. My grief expressed itself in that way. People were shocked, of course, but when are they not shocked? There is nothing so touching as the inappropriate." Also, there is Ambrose Bierce's statement of the converse in "The Damned Thing": "Against a sombre background humour shows high lights. Soldiers in the intervals of battle laugh easily, and a jest in the death-chamber conquers surprise." And, dozens of similar illustrations of an interesting and obvious psychical fact—possibly depending on the physical fact that all motion tends to

rest, with its corollaries: the greater the speed the greater the friction; the higher the pendulum-swing the nearer to reversal; the acuter the tension the closer to snapping-point; and so on.

There is a place, not for everything, but for everything you choose to put in a place. Artistically that place is never the ordinary place, never the place the feminine mind assigns to everything.

True art is always a little out of plumb. A woman puts the doormat exactly parallel with the doorstep: a man kicks it artistically aside. A woman disposes the antimacassar squarely upon the back of the chair: a man pulls it comfortably to the seat. Mark Twain complained vainly of the housemaid who insists upon pushing a chest right back to the wall, so that the lid will not stay up when the chest is opened: the generation of housemaids defies him, moved by fixed instinct. And the inevitable place for Whistler's butterfly-signature to his pictures is the last place the average woman would choose.

Yet one may hope, since the sex is adaptable. In the things that concern it, it has learned to prefer hand-made lace to machine-made: doubtless without understanding that the artistic reason for preference is the slight irregularity of the hand, as compared with the stiff monotony of the machine. If man is the fare sex, woman is the share sex; and she can be taught to share our knowledge that "there is no excel-

lent beauty that hath not some strangeness in the proportion"—since Perfect is necessarily imperfect and the Admirable is always askew. That is why the Parthenon is crooked; that is why "intentional variations from true vertical and horizontal lines exist in all the best architectural work in all styles." That is why no good statue is precisely symmetrical, and the width of the border of old Persian rugs varies on different sides of the same rug—"to avoid the Evil Eye."

Odd's even, even's odious: 't is a lesson most women need to learn, and many men. When Mahony painted a conflict of centaurs, he painted the centaurs at the exact edge of a precipice, and fitly called his picture *To the Bitter End*. The undermost centaur had not an inch of brown heath or barren rock between his hind-leg and destruction: the situation was strained till it snapped. Similarly, a Queensland author, poisoning a woman in a story some time ago, poisoned her in the drawing-room and dragged her right against her child's cot in the bedroom to die—distilling agony to the dregs. Similarly, one charming picture now or formerly lent to the Brisbane Art Gallery is called *An Ice-Breaker on the Elbe*. (Without knowledge, one infers that at Spring's advent a powerful bluff-bowed steamer is set to work to hasten the disintegration of the floating ice somewhere between Hamburg and Cuxhaven, and that in the channel she cuts a line of

released vessels follows as the relief squadron followed through the Mountjoy's breach in the Londonderry boom.) Ice-floes lie under a lowering sky, with a dull-red sun shining over the vessel to shimmer wonderfully down murky depths of foreground. Behind, one sees dimly the following fleet. The impression of the whole is perfect—it looks like truth, yet truth finely idealised in colour. But the vessel is geometrically in the middle of the picture, and the sun glows through the haze geometrically above the middle of the vessel; and this gives any properly-constituted mind a feeling of irritation which all the charm of the work can scarcely conquer. Why? Because you get a glimpse of the man behind the work, deliberately pulling certain strings in order to get certain effects; and the human mind is built so that it hates to think of itself as a marionette on a wire—the thought dissolves one's honest pride of independence.

In these instances, the artists are in error. They show themselves not artists, but mechanics—stage-carpenters, contriving that the pantomime fairy shall fly up the precise centre of the stage; that the side-scenes shall come forward precisely the same distance (who hasn't seen an anxious carpenter hitching his scenes back or forward after the curtain rises, with the instinct of a careful mother hitching her little girl's frock straight?). The stage-ideal throughout, indeed, is in grotesque conformity with the erroneous notion that order is man's first law. The hero must always

die in a particular patch of limelight ; slow music must always lead up to the catastrophe ; in Sheridan's time, the heroine always went mad in white satin.

Puff. Now Tilburina comes in stark mad in white satin ?

Sneer. Why in white satin ?

Puff. O Lord, sir—when a heroine goes mad, she always goes into white satin.

But this conformity with bourgeois conceptions of fitness is barbarously inartistic. The outré is not necessarily better, but let us worship the outré rather than the obvious. The Scriptural chaos must have been far more attractive than the Scriptural universe depicted in some old Bibles—as regularly wooden as a row of skittles. When I visited England a while ago I stayed a short time with an estimable English family which always, when eating, cleaned its plates. (Cleaning one's plate seems to be a well-marked English trait.) Being an Australian, I never cleaned my plate ; and on the third day the head of the family kindly took me to task. It irritated the excellent British citizen to see an uncleaned plate on a British citizen's table. So at some personal inconvenience I cleaned my plate until the very last meal ; and then Poe's Imp of the Perverse insisted that I should leave a spoonful of soup, and a fragment of joint, and a morsel of pudding, and a heel-tap of ale. I felt instinctively that the farewell was saddened by those

uncleaned plates; and, much to my regret, my relations with that estimable British family have never been quite so cordial since. And yet one feels in the marrow of one's bones that an artist should never clean his plate.



THERE is beauty in the precise adjustment of means to ends, the beauty of law fulfilled. The sufficiency of a logarithm, the finality of a chess-move, the good carpenter's invisible joint, the assurance that a pint's a pound: all these and a thousand kindred things are beautiful with a natural beauty. But artistic beauty is quite other: Art is Nature raised to the *manth* power; and the course of evolution is from the geocentric real to the androcentric ideal. Our ancestors are friendly enemies: friends in that they have presented us with their cravings and satisfactions, enemies in that their gift is paid for by a loss of individuality, a loss of the power to develop new cravings and satisfactions for one's-self. Their mental path was by impression, through habit, to instinct; and instinct is a slave. We desire to move by reason to mastery, abolishing habit unless habit be proven beneficial. For every habit is a bond, a concession to the dominating Universe that in the end destroys the Ego. Since we are children of the Universe, it pays to barter a portion

of personal liberty that we may establish a sure title to the remainder; but he who barter all is undone.

Because of this necessity for defying a mathematical Universe, artistic humanity goes askew in Time as in Space. Askewness is one proof of progress, one example of man's new-creation of the heavens and the earth. The health of the artist is shown in his freedom from the disease of punctuality. "A stitch in time saves nine," and that is why the artist never saves, since it is better deliberately to make ninety unnecessary stitches than of compulsion to obey one proverb. "Be virtuous, and you will be happy," becomes "Be happy, and you will be virtuous,"—and all the copy-book moralities that represent the slavish acceptances of times past turn similarly topsy-turvy. The artist makes the grand refusal of Prometheus the Fire-Bringer, and shouts Art and the Man in face of the gods of routine and labels, zealously puffing to destroy "that little, fluttering," temporary "flame one calls One's-Self."

The label-god is especially to be resisted. George Moore, following Harry Thurston Peck, was lately discussing the ominous significance of names. And there is no mistake about it: we are all what our names make us. Is not Napoléon as necessarily le Grand as Albert is the lackadaisically Good—for nothing in particular? What man could achieve greatness upon whom his god-parents thrust the baptismal titles of

Reginald Frederick? Do we not owe the inanities of modern womankind to Maude with an *e* and Alyce with a *y* and Gladys in conjunction with Smith? But what a treasury of domestic virtue in the plain Jane of our foremothers! what cooking capacity in Susan! how Martha swept and scrubbed! to what majesty might not Mary aspire! Question: Why are our Miltons mute and inglorious? Answer: Because they are named Gerald Augustus instead of plain John. For what saith the proverb: "GIVE A DOG A BAD NAME, AND HANG HIM!" His name is the one thing a man never escapes from. He can change his creed and his tailor, he can divorce his wife, he can throw away every atom of flesh and get a complete new body every few years; but he cannot drop the consecrated cross of the christening-font or evade the sinister obsession of the birth-certificate. *Post equitem sedet Eustace Algernon*, and round Clara Ysabel's neck the noose is drawn every night anew. Vainly the hare doubles in deference to a legator: Mahound is always at its heels; and long after the individual is annihilated his name may be enjoying tombstone immortality at sixpence a letter, or ninepence if Old English text be permitted more tenderly to assuage the ecstasy of Grief.

Deduce the cash value of notoriety in literature. We are what our names make us, but we are what other fellows' names make us.

Men of thought, so-called, are often but the parasites of men of action or other men of thought. Jones makes a name and earns the vulgar scrutiny; Bones, as author, or publisher, or bookseller, or journalist, picks up the biographical, anecdotal crumbs fallen from the great man's table, and sauces them into an appetising dish for readers greedy to know even the fashion in which Jones scratches his leg at contemplative moments. Publicity is the mother of purchasing patronage, and Jones's publicity is ready-made: his paragraph advertisements are inserted gratis in all the papers; his name metaphorically glares on ten-foot hoardings throughout the country. So Bones, as author, saves time and money by hiring the contemporary John L. Sullivan to pass for the writer of his book, and win it instant vogue; or, as publisher, he wheedles an approving comment from the contemporary Gladstone, and launches his literary nonentity at the tail of a popular political kite; or, as prudent pressman, he fawns to the local demigod and diaries down the demigod's conversational slip-slop against the day of the demigod's death. All interesting examples of the parasitic method, doubtless justifiable on low moral grounds as well as on the exalted grounds of expediency or necessity.

The business of journalism, in particular, is to whet the edge of circulation on the hone of notoriety. For journalism does not live by lying prostrate before

Moses and Confucius, or by continually pointing out the beauties of Herodotus or Livy. Livy and Confucius, as popular dishes, have been "off" for some time, and the public lack of demand for them is most enthusiastic—probably because there is a well-founded impression that they are dead. The structure of successful journalism is built on the proverb that a living dog will sell ten times as many papers as a dead lion. In literature the same rule holds, though literature has its Napoleonic exceptions. But, generally speaking, there is no advertisement like Life, though Death booms your sale for the moment that the living man is held in memory. Life, not Death, is the successful log-roller ; for the reason that it is both object and agent, is itself a log that rolls. Death is a log at rest. The science of log-rolling is based on the principle of the rolling stone, which requires considerable force to move it from rest, and comparatively small force to keep it in motion. There is always more or less brain inertia to reckon with. Many people will pass three fruit-shops displaying grapes at threepence per lb., and buy from a fourth shop which sells the same grapes at fourpence : because the repeated stimulus decides the purchase. Some commercial travellers think it an advantage to have a man with the same line of goods canvass a town before them. He awakens attention, and sets people thinking of possible profit from handling the goods : then the second man comes

along and secures the orders. "The brain is to a certain extent like a soil in which things must germinate and ripen before they can produce results." * Reason (in the sense of conscious intellectual argument) has little to do with the ordinary man's decisions. He is swayed rather by a tide of unconscious suggestions, which rises till it bursts the barriers to action.

The blind ardours and furies of a crowd exhibit a similar absence of argumentative process. A crowd has the affectability of a woman, the inconsequence of a child, the destructive propensity of a savage. When animated by a strong emotion it exerts upon its members a distinct hypnotic influence which sends brains toppling like card-houses. Average humanity is swayed by instincts and impressed by images. The alleged cruelties to Cubans might never have stirred America to war with Spain ; while the sinking of the Maine fired the popular imagination and forced the Government to war. The annual slaughter of thousands of Australian infants through their parents' ignorance passes unnoticed by a multitude of persons who were profoundly thrilled when three or four babies were found in the Makins' back-yard. And does anyone believe that the hysterical crowd which watched the passage of Transvaal contingents was acquainted

* From F. Halleck's *The Education of the Central Nervous System*—an inspiring book.

with the causes and objects of the war, or had reasoned regarding its ethical right or wrong?

The small power of individual judgment which the ordinary man acquires deserts him inevitably in emotional crises. Under the pressure of an insistent image, or the hypnotism of a crowd, he is as effectively derationalised as if he were made insensible by a blow on the back of the head. For illustration: Not long ago *The Wide World Magazine* told the effect of Noise in ending a plague of tree-caterpillars in Eastern U.S.A. It seems that the caterpillars attack apple, maple, sugar, and plum trees, and kill them in a year. They are not to be dislodged by arsenic or kerosene, and before Mrs. Martin's discovery had to be tediously picked-off by hand. It was Mrs. Martin who, blowing a horn to call her husband to dinner, saw with astonishment that the caterpillars fell from an infested tree. Then the local band turned out—

“Now, then,” cried the leader, “‘Auld Lang Syne’—softly.” As the band slowly breathed forth the Scotch song, the caterpillars began to move their bodies in perfect time to the music. The band played faster; faster moved the caterpillars; and then, ere the last note died away, they began to fall from the tree by hundreds.

The theory is that the local band and kindred noises stupefy the caterpillars, whose nervous system has not been tuned to endurance of gross sound-vibrations: consequently they shiver to their fall and the final

fire. And in precisely similar fashion the blare of military bands, the spectacle of flags waving and men marching, the insistence on pictorial ideas like that of "the Empire calling," stupefy the reasoning centres of the ordinary person with an undeveloped cortex to his brain. When he hears "Soldiers of the Queen" he begins to move his brain in perfect time to the music. The more it is played, the faster he moves. Then, like the U.S.A. caterpillar, he "falls off his perch."



CONSIDER, too, the curious periodicity of the generic mind. It is commonly recognised that before you can draw a bucketful of water up the ordinary pump you must pour a dipperful of water down. Similarly, unless you bribe the ordinary intellect with an anniversary, you may pump till your head is tired without getting one responsive idea. Put a centenary in the slot, and the populace will work.

The peculiarity is plainly an aboriginal trait—the mark of a juvenile stage of individual and race-development. Only savage minds worship anniversaries ; the civilised affirm for good things "every place a temple, all seasons summer."

In an intelligent view, a death-centenary would seem a gruesome celebration, were not the instinct of its gruesomeness dominated by the more deeply-

rooted instinct of its anniversariness. In an intelligent view, there is absolutely no reason why Robert Burns (for instance) should be specially remembered at the end of 100 years rather than at the end of 101, or 99, or 58, or any other arbitrary period of what we call Time. And further, if Burns (for instance) had really a message of value, every cultured mind should be permeated with it all the time, and in that case the significance of anniversaries would be lost altogether, since every moment would be as significant as every other.

This follows from the doctrine of association of ideas. The wiser a man grows, and the more extended his culture, the larger becomes his stock of concepts, and the more numerous the connections between them and the images presented to his mind. Thus, a baby looking at a flower may perceive that it is red. An uncultured man may know that it is red and round and odorous and is called a rose. Alice adds that it is good to wear and matches her gown ; Marmaduke that it costs sixpence at the florist's ; and so on. But a cultured man knows all that literature has said about roses ; he reads in the blushing petals the poetry of humanity, and hears as he gazes the ecstatic song of the bulbul :

*"Sweet, ever sweeter, sweetest Love hath been ;
Shirin, Shirintar, O Shirintarin!"*

And the truly wise man, looking, sees and is reminded of so much more that, plainly, at the apex of culture and the extremity of wisdom to which we hope we are tending, the least mental impression derived from any source will suffice by association of ideas to call up the whole thinkable universe from the storehouses of memory and imagination. So that we are really binding ourselves to a lower race-standard when we worship days and times and seasons, and we make a crab-like and degenerate leap by merely honouring our poets a hundred years after they die instead of bringing them into our hearts and living with them and honouring them every moment.

Not long ago a little buzzing correspondent wrote: "I am surprised that you have not noticed the deaths of Walter Besant and Robert Buchanan, recently cabled on the same day." Well, a pleasure of writing, as of life, consists in always being and doing the unexpected, in refraining from the expected. Observance of times and seasons—for meals, or love, or labour—is unworthy of a man free. We see the brutes waking at dawn and sleeping at dusk all the year round—how mechanical! We see King Billy of Banderoo, our proud autochthonous monarch, with his life regulated by suns and moons and periodical ritual—how slavish! We see primitive agricultural communities perpetuating the antique observance of Mayday—how monotonous! Why, the whole virtue of human

evolution is that it brings us power to make Spring in the brain all the year round, whatever the skies say. Civilization, that has endeavoured to end the servitude of bodies, has scarcely begun to emancipate minds. We need another Wilberforce to preach a new crusade on behalf of the religious savage, pious one day in seven; the official savage, with his regulated holidays; the woman savage, with her fetish of birthdays and wedding-days, and her annual repetition of a death-advertisement.

All these things are traditions of ancient slavery—chain-galls and whip-marks. Often the stick has been removed, but silly human sheep still jump at the place where the first sheep jumped. To be joyous or grievous by the calendar, willy-nilly, what a degrading surrender of liberty! A man should be self-poised, judging and deciding his life at every moment, or (if that seem better) yielding absolutely to the moment's influence. Mr. Shandy's Saturday formula satisfied the tidy mind of Mrs. Shandy, no doubt; but he should have been thoroughly ashamed of himself. Yet how many Mr.-Shandys move automatically between hedges of "principles," along a road of "duties," taking their pleasure like medicine, by the clock, and "saving their souls" when they reach the Sabbath milepost—as if the "kingdom of God" were a seven-days bicycle-race. We want new maxims for better minds. A time for nothing, and nothing in its

time ; a place for nothing, and nothing in its place. Are you hungry?—eat! Are you thirsty?—drink! Gay?—rejoice! Sad?—grieve! Refuse Phyllis if your mood be not Corydon's ; never die before you are ready. If nothing else had shown the powerful individuality of Parnell, it would have been shown in this : that he never made appointments and never answered letters. In other words, he refused to bind himself for to-morrow, and he refused to submit his moods to alien disturbance. There are few things more hateful than the necessity of keeping in a cold mood last week's pledge made in a hot one—so the wise man never pledges himself. There is nothing more hateful than the demand that you shall write letters when you don't want to—so the strong man never writes them.

In this matter, as in many others, woman is man's foe. She is essentially a periodic creature, with the phases of the moon, the ebb and flow of the tides—a Tuesday-and-Friday recipe, a machine for the eternal repetition of plum-pudding at Christmas. Her brain is so impressionable that one act begins a habit—and every habit is a fetter : partly for this reason woman is hereditary slave. A great part of woman's life is spent in endeavouring to tether more-individualised man by her habits ; and, for the sake of peace, he often permits the tie. "It is dinner-time"—and you must eat ; "It is bed-time"—and you must

go to sleep ; "It is church-time"—and you follow her sadly. Trailed in her triumphal march, you are none the less a victim that your car is garlanded, your chains gilded. Sometimes a man revolts—the Sex declares him "heartless, unfeeling." Sometimes he disappears from the procession of habits—it is in my mind that the authenticated "missing men"—silently lost from their places at the workshop, by the fireside, are men who have suddenly realised the blank monotony of their lives, their ignoble servitude, and have craved and craved free air until the closest bonds snapped—until they shook off at once all the shackles of home and "business," and went forth to submerge their identity in a new life of freedom. It is the better way of suicide.

You who read this—*You!*—whoever you may be, wherever you are, pause for a moment and consider yourself *sub specie aeterni*: see yourself in the perspective of the universe. What life do you lead? How many of your acts are done to please yourself? how many because the fetish of Habit compels you?—because you have deliberately or unconsciously bound yourself with silken threads that have grown to ropes, to chains, to a vast burden which you carry forward day after day until you die. What tame pack-horses most of us are, plodding under loads of habit! And life, for most of us, is like a pack-horse road, worn

in regular hollows where our predecessors have stepped, and where we step blindly. Or whim-horse would be the better metaphor, since the path of the pack-horse varies : the whim-horse goes in an endless circle. Next whim-horse you see—the older and blinder the better—trudging round the track with his head down, just call him by your own name, and ten to one he'll answer !

*" For most men in a brazen prison live,
Where in the sun's hot eye,
With heads bent o'er their toil, they languidly
Their lives to some unmeaning task-work give,
Dreaming of nought beyond their prison-wall,
And as, year after year,
Fresh products of their barren labour fall
From their tired hands, and rest
Never yet comes more near,
Gloom settles slowly down over their breast ;
And while they try to stem
The waves of mournful thought by which they are
 prest,
Death in their prison reaches them,
Unfreed, having seen nothing, still unblest."*

Of course, there are compensations. We yield so much liberty to gain so much satisfaction of instincts ; but there is always danger lest the loss be greater than the gain. What unprofitable burdens *You* are carrying, for example ; to what life-wasteful habits *You* are slave ! Of course, too, some concession must

be made to habit and convention for the sake of peace and quietness : when in Rome, it usually pays to do as the Romans do. I remember a second-rate and half-intoxicated actor delaying me on a midnight kerbstone to recount, almost with tears, how for the third time he had forgotten his wife's birthday ; though she always remembered his. "This time I wrote it in a diary a month beforehand ; I thought of it two days before, and turned a ring on my finger ; I even wrote to So-and-So to ring me up on the telephone, and tell me about it. But I didn't look at my diary ; the ring slipped round while I was washing ; So-and-So went out of town. Her birthday was on Monday ; and I had a little present all ready—and just came across it to-day—Thursday !—when I went to the drawer. I'd have given anything to have remembered. She doesn't value it half as much now."

That was an emotion creditable to the second-rate, half-intoxicated actor ; and while our wives retain their savage reverence for times and seasons it is possibly better to humour them, trusting gradual race-progress to bring knowledge that proofs of affection have at all times the same essential value.



BUT Besant and Buchanan need not be considered like our wives. Their places in literature have been fixed for ten years, or nearly : Death has not altered them. It is good to flout the Time-and-Season fetish demanding worship on their behalf, and to approach by one iota the ideal of Journalism. For the ideal of Journalism naturally follows the ideal of Life in abolishing the expected-which-happens. Before you open any newspaper of to-day, you know almost precisely what to expect—and you very rarely receive the pleasure of disappointment. There is the leading article, saying on the accustomed page the accustomed thing in the accustomed way. There are the paragraphs ; there the reports ; there the illustrations—everything in regular routine. It is very stupid ; but readers will have it so. Most readers are creatures of Habit, glorying in their chains, incapable of the mental effort required to break them. If the place of the dull article were taken by a story or a poem, their Habit-heavens would fall, — and they would cease to buy the paper ? Would they ? Well, no one knows till the experiment is made, and no one has been bold enough to make the experiment. Perchance—who knows?—the journalistic Habit is a hollow sham, only waiting to be pierced. Perchance, unknown to themselves, readers weary of monotony are only waiting to throw off their chains and welcome the unexpected-which-never-happens.

When the millionaire is found ("In the beginning was a millionaire" will be the first line of the model paper's gospel) and the model paper is founded, it will so consistently use its own thinker to do its own thinking that the majority of persons who live by fifth-hand opinions will be irregularly knocked flat by the wind of its fluttering pages. Irregularly—for the model newspaper will be movable in space and time: the millionaire alone will be fixed. That is to say, when there are no topics and the staff has no ideas the paper will stop issue until ideas and topics come along, and even at other times its size will range from a leaflet to a volume. Further, the model newspaper will go on circuit like the law-courts. There is rarely more than one topic of leading national importance on the carpet at one time, and the model paper will seek that topic where it may be found, and fall upon it while it is yet near. The editor and his assistants will migrate to Melbourne, or Perth, or Hobart—or wherever the topic of the day may be—and be in readiness to write up the Nocent Waterspout on the spot, eftsoons as it rises.* And the Time-and-Season God's lament over modern degeneracy will be loud enough to be inexpressibly gratifying.

* "*Eftsoons the nocent waterspout will rise*" is a remarkable line from the remarkable "poems" written by a remarkable Australian politician—and published!

There is this to be said for the buzzing correspondent : that Death is the one Time-post which perforce must be perpetuated, because it perpetuates itself. "Why permit it ?" you say. Really, there is no reason, if somebody can show us a better way of evading the perpetuity of Life. The choice between Life and Death is a choice of bad habits, and the answer to your demurrer is simply, "Why perpetuate Life ?" And while argument is proceeding Death continues to be the unescapable season—the "Hitherto hath the Lord helped us" mark, at which you turn round to put a full-stop to life-achievement and to consider its worth. And, striking a mean of *pro* and *con*, answer to the buzzing correspondent was delayed for a term—to show that, if I do bring tribute to the Time-and-Season fetish, I bring it of my own free will, in my own time and season, having duly asserted my civilised prerogative of staying away.

As to Besant and Buchanan, there is only the coincidence of Death-days to justify the conjunction. Besant was an industrious journalist, useful and unimportant. The comparative weakness of his novels, with James Rice away, showed clearly that when they collaborated it was Besant who gathered the sticks and Rice who lit the fire. For the rest, Besant defended author against publisher, and possibly carried the defence to an extreme: it seemed contradictory that, to produce the novels which paid his income, he

himself relied upon the middleman whom generically he attacked. He burrowed among the antiquities of London, too, and lightened the gloom of old brick-work and fusty records. Perhaps his best work was work which to-day is rarely read: a series of essays on French literature, interesting and sometimes acute. A solid, conscientious, respectable workman, he never brought a blush to the cheek of modesty, or a flash of originality to the light of literature.

Buchanan's was a different personality, with greater power, broader sweep, and higher significance. His English birth is irrelevant; his parentage was Scottish: he was characteristically a strenuous Scot. Difference of generations and environment did not prevent him from being as good a type of his nation as Burns was: indeed, the essential capacity of Burns was very similar to the essential capacity of Buchanan. These modern Scots are all alike. They have heat without flame; the True Romance lurks in their hearts, but never issues from their lips. They clothe Revolt in Sabbath breeks, remaining both Radical and Respectable. They are too sane to be imaginative, too fanciful to be stupid. They woo the Muse with the uncompromising earnestness of the Shorter Catechism, and through the fields of gramarye their bowels move magnificently. They are fine fellows, and far too shrewd to be poets.

Buchanan wrote verses, plays, novels, pamphlets, and a dozen things beside. He brought to his work a savage energy, a dogged persistence, that made him formidable ; but memorable work is in another category. His literary life was full of apparent contradictions ; the Time-Spirit fought with Heredity over him, and the battle was drawn. He was both honest and prejudiced, both manly and mean, both jealous and unselfish. Disbelieving religion, he clung to it ; bitterly independent, he accepted a pension ; uxorious in his life, he professed horror of Rossetti's uxorious art. And, writing continually, he left little or nothing that will be read twenty years from now.

Buchanan's best literary work is in his verse, and the best quality of his verse is its vigour. He essayed almost every form, and succeeded in almost every unimaginative form. When he would be mystic, as in *The Book of Orm*, two lines by a born mystic like Yeats are worth Buchanan's volume. Through his *Poetical Works* you search vainly for anything original, vital, distinguished. What you find is a vigorous intelligence adapting poetical gleams to current themes. There is no jet, no current ; but a flat expanse of feeling superficially expressed. On the high plane, Buchanan wrote nothing. On the low plane he wrote many things excellent in their way, excellent for one reading, for single publication. A selection of his work that should include a little of everything he pub-

lished, from *Undertones* to *The New Rome*, would be good to keep on the second-rate shelf. Like his prototype Burns, he was less a poet than a forcible writer attuned to poetry; but, unlike Burns, he did not borrow his lyric emotion, and he has little or none of his own.



THE Space-god, the Label-god, and the Time-god, as humanly worshipped, add their quota to illustrate the power of the Dead Hand of the ancestral Mummy.

Not long ago an article in *The English Illustrated Magazine* stressed the influence of that Dead Hand upon English journalism. The writer said that the character of *London Times*, *Standard*, *Daily News*, *Morning Post*, and *Daily Chronicle* is made up of traditions which succeeding editors and staffs regard as inviolable. "What have we said before on this subject?" was one of John Walter's regular inquiries. And when *The Standard*, a few years ago, to the surprise of its proprietor, its literary editor, and everyone else, published a leading article depreciating Meredith, it was privately explained that the article was written without animus, did not represent anybody's opinion, but merely continued the judgment passed upon Mere-

dith by *The Standard* in 1861, soon after the appearance of *Richard Feverel*!

This faith in the Gospel of Mummy is doubtless a remnant of that instinct of ancestor-worship fixed in us by the age-long practice of prehistoric progenitors. Sunday pilgrims to suburban cemeteries, wandering happily among the tombstones, are often unstimulated by affection for a buried relative. Without knowing it, they are satisfying lingering instinct. "I am so happy among graves," a woman will say who never heard of the reverence due to *manes*. And Maude Victoria, trysting in the shadow of shapeless statuary, feels that her lover's pledge is sanctified by the neighbourhood of the Dead. "Eppur si muove!"—Maude Victoria's name is a proof.

Mummy will not prevail, but Mummy is mighty. Consider the enthusiasm for Shakespear's bones displayed by N.S.W. Shakespear society. Shakespear's bones have undoubted literary value. A man interested in literature and Shakespear is necessarily interested in the scrutiny and comparison of Shakespear's origins, in ascertaining how dross became gold in the alchemy of Shakespear's brain. But Mummy is always persuading his worshippers to neglect the substance for the shadow, the future for the past. In finding the legend-root some of us are apt to miss the poetry-flower. Then, a man should gaze forward, not back perpetually. Lot's wife was salted: take care

you are not petrified. Even a moderately Chinese devotion to great-great-Grandfather may undo you. Your parents were fine fellows: they made you; but look to your children.

And aha! . . . Hope! In some recent N.S.W. military manœuvres "the (Australian) Scotchmen"—not to be targets of opposing marksmen—"adopted the precaution of wearing their hirsute tassel at the rear." A fine symbol. Put Scotland behind, put Ireland behind, put England behind—not as sources of inspiration, but as goals of aspiration—and go forward with Australia!

Generally speaking, it is true that Australians have no taste for ancient history: they want the novel note, the momentary impression. Much can be said for the attitude. "The savage turning in his tomb" of each of us demands to be considered critically. It was reasonable that in his day he should praise past time, seeing that he had no comprehension of his place in time coming. But we can follow his bent of ancestor-worship too far. After all, what have Deeds that Won the Empire to do with us? What fun or satisfaction, what fuller, keener life, are we going to get out of them? They have been written off to last century's profit and loss account, and concern to-day's business no more. "But if they had not been, you would not be." Fallacious "if"! They were: we are. "A living dog is better than a dead lion," says Hebrew

wisdom. "Carpe diem!" says Latin wisdom. "Eyes front!—forward, march!" says Australian wisdom.

This is not a diatribe against knowledge. Knowledge is an excellent thing, to be held in reserve in the libraries. But most of the knowledge that has been accumulated is useless to you personally. Too many facts—or lies—have been accumulated about too many people to be overtaken by any one man's acquirement. Since the damnable (?) invention of printing "the mass grows more and more of volumes yet to read, of secrets still to explore." Why not admit frankly that most are not worth reading or exploring?—for us. "Il faut cultiver son jardin," says last week's bridegroom. But accumulation is not cultivation. "Faut une bonne à tout faire," says last year's. You want a just impression of past history and present relations, and details don't matter if your mind is a fit engine of acquisition. Then, if you need knowledge, you can absorb it at any time as a barrister absorbs his brief. Learn, as he does, general principles; and let the particular application depend upon the minute's fee. What modernity implies is not a brain full of knowledge, but one full of indices to knowledge. A dull mind and a memory laden with accurate information about Captain Cook are not to be preferred to a fresh mind that knows merely where to find accurate information about Captain Cook—when wanted. Most of us will never want it. It takes us all our time to build a house and dig a well

and plant a tree and father a son: the four things that ancestral wisdom recommended in posterity-worship.

Turn over pictures of bygone fashions in dress, and note how strange, even ludicrous, may now appear the costumes of our grandfathers and grandmothers. The patches and hoops, the cravats and buckled shoes, are as quaint to the eye of this generation as this generation's dress might seem to the eyes of a gentleman of the court of Queen Anne. La Mode has changed even since the day of our fathers. But our fathers for the most part have been content to change with the mode; and if here and there one clings to the garb of his boyhood he doesn't dream of insisting that his sons shall imitate him. Even when justifying his preference he will rarely venture to declare all other preference unjustifiable.

Fashions in poetry have been almost as numerous as fashions in dress; but in poetry the dead hand of our ancestors is heavy upon us. Nowadays we neither wear slashed breeches nor write interminable epics to exalt religious dogma; but though it is commonly agreed that good taste may be displayed in trousers, a considerable body of opinion still holds that only very bad taste can refuse to recognise *Paradise Lost* and *Paradise Regained* as two of the highest poetical achievements of the human mind. In reality, accord-

ing to the standards set by present fashion, there is little more poetry in the "Paradises" than there was in Queen Victoria. Milton's epics seem to the present generation (when it reads them) rather heavy, and rather faded, and invested with a rather fatiguing magnificence: and they continue to be revered as Queen Victoria is revered—not because they are majestic and musical, but because we have inherited the tradition of reverence from our fathers, and are not strong enough to shake it off.

Pray observe that the argument does not decide whether the present generation is right or wrong ultimately: it urges merely that the present generation is rather bored by Milton, and that, being rather bored, it should courageously admit boredom, instead of exalting the bore at the bidding of generations preceding.

But to successfully fight against prepossessions is to become a snake which swallows itself entirely and remains the same snake. So most people run away at the first encounter. The revised version of the Bible is practically a dead letter—because pious people prefer familiar error to strange truth. There is no place like home, no pie like mother used to make—because strange places and new pies cannot win a verdict in a prejudged case. The brain-molecules which hoard impressions arrange themselves in definite series, and after a time it is physically as difficult or impossible to

alter the series to suit a new impression as it is to make water run uphill.

And a prepossession breeds its own justification, or its further justification. The moment any object is differentiated by praise or blame from other objects, that moment ordinary minds, by dint of focussing attention, begin to see much more to praise or blame than in reality exists. Many of the women who adore Mrs. Brown-Potter are themselves far more deserving of adoration; but the public mind has not been limelighted to their beauties. Much of Shakespear is rubbish which a modern writer would be hooted for producing; but Shakespear has been canonised by critical centuries, and the average reader swallows bad and good with equal rapture. To this day students of English style are led by Macaulay's dictum to give their days and nights to the imitation of Addison, regardless of the fact that Addison's style seems nowadays cumbrous, and that many better models of current usage are writing in the magazines. Here are you eyeing Meredith for merits that you would pass unnoticed in a daily paper.

Of the boasted beauties of classic masters in every branch of art, perhaps half are real: the remainder are factitious and imaginary, but they pass for real because of their classical environment. Hundreds of the beauties extolled in Æschylus would by the same commentators be counted commonplace in Jones. Hun-

dreds of the beauties passed over in Smith are in Virgil called divine, because a reader of Virgil is on the watch for the divine, and a reader of Smith is not. Fame is a rolling snowball, says the adage. So the public, having been taught to admire Kipling, reasons from the part to the whole with illogical certainty, and professes to find even Kipling's nonsense glorious; or having often heard it repeated that *Robbery Under Arms* is one of the best Australian stories, buys *The Sealskin Cloak* or *My Run Home* and conscientiously reads them under the impression that it is enjoying itself. And, if it starts with a sufficiently strong prepossession, probably it is enjoying itself.

Similarly, though Homer and Dante directly provide but a small portion of the poetical stimulus which this generation is receiving, it is continually declared *ex cathedra* that Homer and Dante are the world's two greatest poets, while modern writers of verse are little more than the dust which drifts about their large historic feet. To argue the question absolutely it would be necessary to agree upon a definition of poetry. But such agreement is not necessary to the affirmation that most Australian readers of verse know and care little whether Homer and Dante were poets or palmists. They accept the tradition; they bow to the printed name of Dante, and believe that Homer is something vast and venerable in the verse-line; but the poetical areas of their minds are occupied, not with Achilles

or Beatrice, but with the Man from Ironbark or Blanchelys. Even if you ask of those who may be supposed to possess cultured or classical taste, you find they are reading Keats, or Heine, or Robert Bridges; if you notice whom they take pains to write about, it is Browning, or Mallarmé, or Arthur Symons. Dante and Homer are very fine fellows, no doubt; but they are on the shelf with the old maids and copyright legislation.

What is true of Australia is true of other countries: people are everywhere occupied especially with present-day poets, and Dante and Homer receive far more lip-service than heart-incense. It is here contended, indeed, that this is to some extent just and right. Homer was no doubt a great poet or several great poets in his time; but that is not our time. We have other minds, other tastes, other needs. Homer's beauty and humanity will always have their value; but the plain emotions, the simple scenes, which may be presumed to have delighted the Greeks of 2700 years ago, are not the highest poetical boon that modern readers can desire. Nor, in spite of tragic passion and picturesque phrasing, are the imaginative vagaries of Dante more sufficing. According to present lights, the Dante and Homer of tradition are 50 per cent. genuine poetry and 50 per cent. academic humbug—Brocken-spectres whose huge apparent bulk terrifies the average person

because he never stops to scrutinise closely the homely mortal who casts the shadow. Dante lives partly indeed because of his merit, but partly also because five centuries claque for him. His snowball got a good start in days when snowballs were scarce, and it has kept on rolling. But the philosophy of the 13th century is now exploded, and in so far as it is based on that philosophy it is time the poetry of the 13th century exploded too. The dead hand should be buried.

It can be argued, indeed, that much modern poetry is essentially a parasitic growth upon the poetry of Homer and Dante and Milton. Doubtless many treasured ideas and images have been pilfered from their store. Not only our daws, but our peacocks, often strut in borrowed feathers. But in whose feathers did the peacock of antiquity strut? Homer, it is admitted, collected the ballads of a generation, probably of an era: he may have been merely the editor of a ballad anthology: when all the guesses are sifted we know regarding him—nothing. Whatever inspiration Dante gave his followers, he would certainly have been impotent without his predecessors. There is some evidence to support a theory that lacking the basis of Vondel's *Lucifer* Milton would never have had a *Paradise* to lose. We all stand on the shoulders of the Past. But while it is comparatively easy to detect the plagiarisms of modern writers, the geese plucked to furnish ancient quills have flown out of sight down the

vista of the centuries. The one thing certain is that between ancient and modern dishonours are easy.

The worship of names illustrates once more the force of habit. Homage to "classic" writers is in most persons partly or wholly automatic. When an infant learns to walk you see it devoting its whole mind to taking one step and another. It purses its mouth, fixes its gaze, wrinkles its forehead. Its elders encourage it by examples which it imitates laboriously. It works with its whole brain, and every hesitating advance is a reasoned act. But by degrees the act becomes a habit: a reflex path is worn in the cerebrum, and the automatic centres take charge of the legs. Upon an impulse from consciousness walking continues unconsciously. By-and-by even the impulse becomes unconscious; the limbs obey a hint so imperceptible that it passes unrealised. We walk without knowing it, as (the tag is irresistible) Monsieur Jourdain spoke prose. Just so the schoolboy, learning from his master or his text-book that Homer was a great poet, begins to walk mentally in the path his elders have trod. He no more asks "Why?" than as an infant he asked why he should toddle: he imitates the belief as he imitated the act. As he grows, the first faint impression on his brain is repeated until he has a fixed idea from which it is hardly possible to escape. The din of tradition has left a permanent dint. His mind repeats its lesson automatically—"Homer is a great poet." And if he

would unlearn the lesson, he is met by a physical obstacle as real as if he tried to unlearn walking. So, as a rule, his prepossession triumphs over feeble doubts: you can no more persuade him to leave off Homer than to leave off drink or flannel.

Yet there is another side——



I WOULD like to see a symbolic picture of "Human Evolution" painted by an artist with the skill and imagination of Max Klinger. To right of the centre should appear the vivid, sunlit figure of a man marching—the Man to-day. Behind him and a little beneath should be the broadening company of Shadows from whom he is descended—the parents, the ancestors, the primitive men—the ape-animals, dog-animals, swine-animals—all the array of brutes that succeeded the fish-animals and reptiles—and so down the scale of hereditary life until the outlines of shape, clear at first, growing gradually vague, should lose themselves in gloom of the Beginning. Before him and a little above should be the company of Shadows to whom he gives birth—his children, his grandchildren, his descendants in illimitable generations, expanding fanwise more and more darkly till they should vanish in gloom of the End. Around all the sand-glass—

symbol of the lapse of Time. Below the centre, the tropical beach where we think Life first may have begun. Above, the face of supreme Man, Beyond-Man, Man of the Future, with his mouth of sweetness, eyes of dream, and brow of power.

[The artist might offer the central Adam an Eve for mate, but woman is unessential to the conception. Sex is an evolutionary detail. The woman gives Life extension, not intensity—makes for perpetuity, not progress. It is true that many men walk our streets clutching a stick—a movable tree-bough—a reminiscence of the ape-ancestor ; * but many more women carry para-

* The secondary use of the stick for defence does not affect the fact that, as an ornamental companion, it is usually a badge of weak character, scanty intellectual acquirement, superficial civilisation. Henry Parkes disdained umbrellas ; but the crooked appendage of the vacuous English " Johnnie " is proverbial. The later use of the bough as a weapon, a club, is seen among the more primitive, or more vital, races and individuals. The Irishman's shillelagh thwacks the same broken-skulled moral as the Australian aboriginal's nulla-nulla. There are other local examples beside that of George Dibbs, who presented a ring-gidya stick to the British king. In the hands of G. Dibbs the stick would typify club-usage ; in the hands of King Edward it typifies cling-usage—the transference reversing the process by which the weapon-symbol of the virile monarch of yore became the ornamental sceptre of the weakling modern monarch.

sols—nearly every woman is uneasy without something in her hands—some holdfast in case she drop from the hereditary branch. And the man in the street straightens his spine; the woman stoops more—she has been more recently erected from all-fours. Sitting is a concession to the quadruped in both sexes; but woman is the sedentary sex. And woman, the wilder animal, holds more of the wild-animal's vitality: she lives longer than the man, so that in compensation for standing up last she lies down last.—All this being seductively divagatory, discontinuously episodical, unnecessarily irrelevant, and ten more long words implying bad art. Comes of watching local painters sacrifice art to idiosyncrasy.]

In European houses where family portraits have been preserved for generation after generation, the scion of a historic stock may sometimes trace his own lineaments in a pictured ancestral face. Which of us

When war brought peace, the second usage of the stick became the third usage as a badge of authority or office—as in an usher's wand, a Speaker's mace. But through all changes it is the atavistic bough—the ape-man's heirloom.

*"Imperial Cæsar, dead and turned to clay,
May stop a hole to keep the wind away,"*

and the supports of our ancestral forest-home become the dude's solace, the king's sceptre, the jest of a Melbourne bagnio. For these be evil days.

has not noticed the reproduction by a child of some trick of gait or gesture not seen in the parents, referable perhaps to a grand-parent, perhaps seen only in a distant kinsman? How often, in a family, is there observed some son or daughter with traits dissimilar from those of all known relatives. The records of breeders of animals contain instances of individual reversion to a type that disappeared from the line scores of years before. Weismann's theory of the germ-plasm explains these and analogous cases by postulating a halving of the germ-elements—one set becoming active in the production of a new body, while the other set is handed down as a latent force that may become active only after the passage of generations.

On this theory, every human being holds some trace, however infinitesimal, of the influence of every one of his human and other ancestors right to the beginning of Life. Stand, then, before a mirror, and see the shadowy faces of the Past peering over your shoulder in an army that would over-fill the earth—since, even to the time of the Norman conquest, a man of to-day may count some ninety millions of forbears who have mixed their blood in his. More, see those faces peering through you—looking through your eyes, giving that shape to your forehead, that turn to your nostril, that line to your lips; and realise how insignificant is any single individual in the line of evolution. So little of himself is his own, to so very, very

small an extent is he able to perpetuate the acquirement of his brief life, that the individual has been truly said to become in the scientific aspect hardly more than a germ-bearer—one whose function in the universal process is merely to hand on to another the flame of existence.

Then consider the apparatus of thought and emotion which reaches a climax in the brain. Just as the fleshless hands of millions of ancestors have given to your hand its slowly-acquired prehensile power, just as every peripheral organ is an inherited product tardily won by myriads of beings that once had active life and are now dissipated in the mouldered dust of ages, so the central nervous system and its resultant of conscious thought are your legacy from long-gone cycles of centuries. The human infant is an ape with potentialities, the human child a barbarian capable of civilisation ; and you, the man—your brain repeats the ancestral brain as your body repeats the ancestral body—it conforms with a type which varies only minutely in thousands of years. As you think, then, before the mirror, see the pale wraiths of ancestral thought come floating from the far past to merge with and alter the thoughts which your own experience has originated ; and, once more, at the height of your pride of individuality, be very humble in the presence of that tremendous debt. You are “yourself” ; but how much yourself ? or, rather, how inconceivably little !

One theory of the development of ideas suggests that, in inheriting the ancestral thought-machine, we inherit also a number of latent ancestral thoughts. That is, the hereditary brain-cells, though they be composed of entirely fresh nerve-plasma, are yet arranged after an ancestral plan beyond our control, and can spontaneously generate thoughts in which individual experience has no part. The theory is but an extension to conscious thought of a power well-known to reside in hereditary nerve-cells when automatic impulse is concerned. Conscious individual brain-acquirement, for example, can have no share in the nerve-control of the foetal heart. N. S. Shaler, Harvard professor of geology, who writes of this and kindred subjects in his book about *The Individual*, relates his endeavours to capture the spontaneous thoughts that seem just to rise to the level of consciousness—to be always flitting over the edge of the conscious horizon; and finds that one's capacity to think in a way apparently independent of his own experience can be strengthened and increased by deliberate effort.

Making the befitting literary application, this theory furnishes interesting explanation of the irresponsible character of lyric poetry. From the earliest times the poet has been regarded as "possessed" by some external power. In this "possession" the priestess of Apollo raved, the Italian improvisatore chanted, the Maori tohunga writhed and foamed. From the earliest times

the poet's chief themes have been love and death, the beauty of skies and woods and waters,—aboriginal passions and the natural phenomena familiar from the human cradle. We know now that the power resides in the poet's brain, that the poetic "possession" is mere escape of brain-centres from their normal control; and we infer that lyric poetry is essentially the product of inherited emotion.

Sometimes the escape is conscious, the inheritance realised. You feel a detachment, a duality in your brain, as if some primal breath had blown across it. In our small local sphere, Roderic Quinn tells me that there are times when his own individuality seems to sleep; when he fancies himself standing on a Donegal cliff under a wild sky, gazing through driving sleet at the dark Atlantic heaving below; and strange alien thoughts come teeming, crowding. Between dreams and waking Will Ogilvie, bred on the Scottish border, has imagined himself heading a reivers' band across the Tweed, and the picture has recurred with a vivid, an intimate detail that seems never to have been learnt through his own senses. And Louise Mack says that "When I write verse I am not conscious of words—the feeling and the thought are almost dropped on the paper. The moment I am conscious, think of a word—the poem is dead, and I stop—can't hear it, don't feel it. I always write poetry as if it is someone else's that I've half-forgotten, and slowly am drawing

down from the recesses of the brain, driven to it by some tide of feeling."

Thus is justified the belief which Macaulay reached on other grounds, that civilisation implies the decay and death of poetry. The more we read, the more we remember, the less opportunity we give to the primal ancestor within us to picture the emotions that he felt when red blood surged through a virgin brain in the vigorous youth of the race. It has been written that every savage is a poet, however imperfect his power of expression. It may soon be written that every civilised man is prosy. Only here and there some young and vital brain, escaping from the worry of modern life, the weight of bookish ages, survives to astonish us with the keen sight, the full emotion, the glowing picture, born in some prehistoric group of brain-cells perchance ten thousand years ago.

The moral is that a man should be kind to his ancestors now they are old. If you are a Murphy, before you read *The Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire*, reflect that the mass of Gibbon's resounding facts may bury Red Murtagh, the ancient bard, under a weight which will make it impossible for him to emit one spark of the fiery inspiration that gladdened the hearts of his sept. If you are a Macpherson, think that the study of medicine may murder an Ossian within you. Your brain is the tomb of your ancestors; but they have

been buried alive—if you listen you may hear them squeaking. Conceive the array of personal ghosts putting mournful heads out of their nerve-cells when they wake up along with you each morning, and hear Lah, the cave-man, remarking to First-up-a-Tree, the ape-man: “He read a society novel last night! That was a barrowful of clods on Johnson. Johnson’s dead!”

No; don’t read so many books; don’t acquire so much experience; don’t worry your overburdened brain. Go out into the sun and the rain, and let your ancestors talk to you. Love, fear, hate, curiosity,—all your most vital emotions,—they share them all. It may be, if you are a weakling denizen of cities, that they still feel them more keenly than you can feel with your little bit of individuality. Reverence old age, especially your own old age within your brain, because that typifies the youth of your race, and you can never be so young and joyous, so young and strong, so young and loving, as your race has been. It has been said that to little children belongs the kingdom of Heaven. It can be more truly said that to little children belongs the kingdom of Earth. And this is the gospel and the Law.



BUT, once again, Art is other than Life, and often a stranger at the board. In his book of *Children's Ways* Professor Sully reproduces many scrawls by juvenile artists that unilluminated parents must regard with startled curiosity. To see elevated to scientific rank the random caricatures of ante-bedtime infants is——! And one cannot say that Sully justifies his ponderous discussion of the small people's mimicries. The in-æternum deductions from four-year-Tommy's A HORS or seven-year-Cissy's A MAN remain, after much argument, invisible. Even the temporary interest is strictly placid and parental.

From an impersonal standpoint, children's art is less interesting than savage or aboriginal art, because it lacks that æsthetic quality of which adult-age generally shows glimmerings. The child's stimulus is not artistic, but imitative—probably in essence creative; based on that desire to make something, that pleasure in the Ego's handiwork, which branches in so many directions from the root of race-preservation. Professor Sully takes his mimes a trifle too seriously. Over-seriousness, indeed, is the fault of his book, as himself dimly realises. His heavy style clogs the nimble heels of his subject. With twice the energy he could have told four times as much in half the space. Books should be like rivers, with a free movement to an ultimate sea. Or, if they be landlocked

lakes, replacing with the charm of rest the strength of motion, the eye should range infinitely through clear depths. And Prof. Sully's book is like his mind—muddy—with synthesis swallowed in the cloud of details.

Nonetheless, he adds together many attractive items and illustrations—as, for example, in dealing with the childish imagination. The childish imagination is a development of the creative instinct previously referred to; the same force impels to the building of myths and brick houses; in each case the essence of the pleasure is a constructive emission from the Ego. And as this creative power lessens, so lessens the individual or racial hold on life.

A child's capacity for vitalising inanimate objects springs from his own superabundant vitality. He can not only live himself, but can dower trees and stones with life by a projection of the Ego—just as the childlike races did in olden time, as we know by their myths; just as childlike savages do to-day. Jean Ingelow relates how, when about three years old—

I had the habit of attributing intelligence not only to all living creatures, the same amount and kind of intelligence that I had myself, but even to stones and manufactured articles. I used to feel how dull it must be for the pebbles in the causeway to be obliged to lie still and only see what was round about. When I walked out with a little basket for putting flowers in

I used sometimes to pick up a pebble or two and carry them on to have a change: then, at the farthest point of the wall, turn them out, not doubting they would be pleased to have a new view.

In other words, Jean Ingelow read her Ego into the Universe; she re-created the Universe in terms of herself; and that is what every individual or every race does in greater or less degree, in proportion as physical organisation supplies the need and the power.

So the reality of a doll to a little girl, or of a toy-horse to a little boy—depending partly upon the individual brain and its stage of development—depends partly, perhaps chiefly, upon the brain's vital capacity to raise "the imagination" to the required pitch. And a child can see men and women where an adult sees chips and shells, partly because the child's vitality is stronger than the adult's. A child of very intense vitality does not need even the symbol. The little girl in William Canton's book cuddled in her arms a space of empty air where she saw the "invisible playmate" lie.

Immaturity of the brain may to some extent account for such feats of the childish imagination. Before the higher cells have attained full development and control a child's brain is apt to confuse internal with external perceptions. The child who, frightened by the story of a bogey-man, fears to go to bed in the dark, does actually see the

bogey-man in the dark. He is not there to adult eyes; but he is there to the child's brain, and quite conceivably to the child's eyes—since a child's visual centres, normally ill-regulated, may paint an apparition on the retina just as the abnormally ill-regulated centres of an adult can. When William Canton's little girl died, her father, bending over her, saw for a moment her "invisible playmate" in the flesh, just as she saw it always. He thought the sight "incredible"—it was cerebrally quite simple.

It follows from what has been said that the need which many people experience for "perfect scenery" in dramatic representation is partly a sign of lowered vitality, or possibly of a brain so busy that it has no surplus vitality to spare for visualising unseen objects. Yet it is not so long since, for example, the change of scene from a forest to a street was depicted on the stage by a mere change of placard from *A Forest* to *A Street*. Shakespear's plays were originally represented on a floor strewn with rushes, the side walls hung with arras; a board with *Westminster*, *Corinth*, *Messina*, fixed the scene of the play; the audience's imagination did the rest. When a battle was to be fought, "two armies fly in represented by swords and bucklers, and then"—asks Sidney in his *Defence of Poesie*—"what hard heart will not receive it for a pitched field?" We are more exacting nowadays—partly because brain-life has become so com-

plex that we cannot imagine a forest unless we see scenery simulating a forest, or an army unless we see at least several dozen supers; and partly, also, because the modern playgoer is not as strong a man, not as vital a man, as his forefathers, ignorant of tea and coffee and tobacco, and of all the multifarious strains and stresses of an age which the other day impelled one of its victims to the pathetic complaint, "It's so horrid to be hurried!"

And note that the scenery-exacting person is the complex-brained person who goes to see Irving, not the simpler-brained man who prefers Chevalier. The audience that enjoys Shakespear may be said, generally speaking, to be a more "educated" audience than that which attends the music-halls; and it demands more in the way of scenery to make the drama real to its brain. *The Merchant of Venice* must be mounted with historic exactitude. But music-hall performers do turn after different turn before the same "interior"; and the spectators never dream of asking that a coster song shall be sung in a coster environment, or that an imitation draper's-shop shall be fitted up before Dan Leno sings "The Shopwalker." The child dispenses with costume and scenery; the music-hall audience is content with costume; the theatrical audience demands both costume and scenery. And there is a corresponding retrogression in vitality of body and progression in complexity of brain.

[It would be interesting to argue from this the place of the Chinese in the vital scale of races. In a Chinese theatre there is no scenery, no necessity for scenery, since the vivid Chinese imagination takes as much as you please for granted. An actor comes before the audience and says he is a king, walking in the gardens of his palace. That is enough for the audience: there is the king, there are the gardens, there is the palace, complete in every detail. The European eye sees a curiously-bedizened personage fall flop on the boards, get up again, and walk off o.p.; the Chinese eye sees a beautiful damsel, crossed in love, despairing of life, drown herself in the canal which runs through her father's estate, and pictures the finding of the body, the solemn funeral, the grief of the parents, the remorse of the responsible male, and fifty consequences more or less remote.]

It is a good observation of Prof. Sully's that a child so easily sees quaint likenesses between objects because his mind is untroubled by all the complexity of the objects. A child's fresh brain bases simple analogies on leading traits—the only traits he recognises; while adults, hoarding a multitude of impressions, lose vivacity, and lose also power of detaching single impressions. Thus the idea of parental relationship, dominant in W. Canton's "W.V.," sent her mind leaping to the pretty phrase, "Aren't the buds the trees' little girls?"—a phrase poetical, almost re-

condite, to adult-age, but almost matter-of-fact to a child.

The explanation of nearly all the quaint sayings of children lies in this reference from their limited known to the unknown ; we smile to see Infinity's pyramid toppling from such an impossible apex-balance. Thus one of the first notions of a child, as of a savage, is that motion implies life. The little girl who offered a biscuit to a tram is paralleled by the Red Indians who brought corn to the first prairie locomotive. And doubtless the awe with which Fulton's steamboat was regarded is kin to a dog's fear of a bone moved by a string. The immature or incompetent intelligence is always generalising on insufficient data : from one analogy it argues others, often proceeding to complete resemblance. Just why the mind should be so eager to associate unrelated or correlated ideas is inexplicable : there is no physical or psychical explanation of the reason of the pleasure we take in discovering likenesses or differences in concepts or percepts ; but the pleasure itself is one of the most notable facts of mental life, especially in children. One guesses dimly, and sees an adumbration of the universal flux of things, scattered into moving variety and returning to identity as to a natural home of rest. But our inborn rhythm, our need and joy of classification, account for much of the charm in poetical allusions to stars as "flowers of the sky," or to flowers as "stars

of the earth," or to butterflies as "pansies flying"—the last a childish analogy.

A child's "pitiless logic" arises partly from his power of subjective concentration. He not only sees one aspect of a thing to the possible exclusion of all other aspects; but temporarily he devotes the whole mental force to the act of seeing. It is this singleness of view which accounts for much of the "unfeelingness" of childhood. Often the child's mind cannot hold more than one emotion at a time, and the propositions crowd out the corollaries. Thus the boy who shouted down the shaft where his brother had fallen, "Say, Tommy, if you don't ever come up alive can I have your pup?" was not necessarily callous or unfraternal. He was simply dominated by the pup-idea to the exclusion of the brother-idea. Quite conceivably, in another mood, the same boy would have given all his belongings or his life to get his brother out. There are cases where the egoistic sentiment is obviously characteristic, yet it does not follow that blame can be attached even hypothetically. Utter unselfishness can no more be expected from the childish brain than 100yds. in 10secs. can be expected from childish legs. Prof. Sully quotes a boy of three who was told by his mother to stay and mind a baby-sister while she went downstairs. On going up again some time after she met him on the stairs. "Being asked why he had left the baby, he

said there was a bee in the room and he was afraid he would get stung if he stayed there. His mother asked him if he wasn't afraid his little sister would get stung. He said 'Yes,' but added that if he stayed in the room the bee might sting them both, and then she would have two to take care of." No charge of want of sympathy lies against this plausible little self-seeker. He may fairly plead mental minority. The child is to be tested by his own standards, not by adults'.

Possibly, however, the attempt at a scientific explanation of children's ways is itself essentially unscientific. It ends with the statement, "The child is young"—and understanding of that all-comprehending youth comes better from examples than from precepts, from illustrations than from arguments. Prof. Sully's long chapter on "The Age of Imagination" adds little to Kenneth Grahame's picture of Harold the muffin-man, "who day and night went through passages and up and down staircases, ringing a noiseless bell and offering phantom muffins to invisible wayfarers. It sounds a poor sort of sport; and yet—to pass along busy streets of your own building, for ever ringing an imaginary bell and offering airy muffins of your own make to a bustling, thronging crowd of your own creation!" Or how many books of commentary on boys' ways is *Huck Finn* worth? It is the old controversy—should one see flowers as a botanist or as a

poet? But are botanist and poet mutually exclusive? Can one not be a little of both?



CHILDISH egoism, inconscient, single-minded, is admirably illustrated by the literary method of Kipling. The argument may come by way of *Kim*; possibly Kipling's best long-story, certainly the best-finished, completest. *Kim* opens tamely; later you are charmed and absorbed; and the book closes with the old effect of brilliancy, dexterity, et præterea not very much. Why cannot Kipling master the architectonics of the novel? Why are his short-stories so much more satisfactory, in the way of Art? Because he was, is, and will be a precocious Indian child, whose art stopped short in the *Gazette* office at Lahore, and who cannot add a man's stature to his boyish cubit. He can see; but he cannot combine things seen, cannot induce and deduce. His clear vision—it is the child's; his bright, clean touch—it is the clever school-boy's; his fresh, unjaded wonder, his perpetual interest in the spectacle of life—these are the prerogative of the narrow, undeveloped brain, with energy massed in a torrent, not spreading in a pool.

Consider the child and the savage (that other child) seen throughout Kipling's work. *Captains*

Courageous—a boys' story-book simply. *The Jungle Books*—children's familiar stories of animals that talk. *Wee Willie Winkie*—stories of children so well remembered, therefore so well told. *Stalky and Co.*—another boys' story-book. In the short-stories note the dominance of ghost and soldier—superstition and war—the things that terrify and enchant the child and the savage. Love enters rarely, and then less as a thing felt than as a thing seen. *The Light that Failed* missed its mark because Kipling lacks synthetic power; he could see the great motive, but not in its proportions and relations. All Kipling's longer prose has that panoramic effect—the effect of a succession of isolated impressions, detached objects; and it is so that a child-savage sees life: he cannot fuse and deduce. And in Kipling's verse and shorter prose: the fondness for machinery—what is it but Budge's yearning "to see the wheels go round"? The disproportionate stress on the Flag of England, the contempt for other flags: what are these but the tribal traditions of the savage? And so on.

Now take *Kim*—a story for boys, a panorama of India. We can like it because we are all children of a larger growth, as Kipling is a child of arrested growth. The boy—"hero," Kim, is a boy all through: there are no Passions in the book; and motley India passes before us in a succession of pictures, just as Kim passes before us in a succession of episodes. There is in the

book no inevitable continuity, no vital rotundity: any chapter could be lopped off and replaced by a few tag-words without bringing sense of loss. That is the way in which the child-Kipling sees Life—as a series of disconnected impressions. And the essence of Art is to unite impressions in the Whole of Life—to say why, to show whither. For the rest: Kipling's notion of the Indian Secret Service is attractively displayed (he has a child's love of the cabalistic *Secret*). The Babu is a marvel, though his contrasts are forced; he wants sub-tones and side-aspects, but Kipling does not deal in these; a child does not see them.

Kipling's affirmation of his "right of plagiary" represents the child's rudimentary notion of fair dealing. Yet the argument against plagiary is clear. It is common to hear literary theft defended because many great authors have stolen; though plainly, if theft be a crime, the number or celebrity of the criminals makes no difference in its turpitude. One is asked whether it is not better to borrow and improve than not to borrow and not to improve; and one answers, Certainly, if the debt be acknowledged and paid. Ethically, in literature and other fields, it is not better to steal and improve, than not to steal and not to improve. Cellini must not steal my nugget to make a statue. Kipling must not steal my little ewe-lamb, feed it and shear it, and call it his sheep.

Before Art, Justice. A man who sweats his brain has just as much right to the credit and profit of his labour as a man who sweats his body. The man who steals the work of another's brain is just as contemptible a thief as the man who steals the work of another's hands.

When one man sows, and ploughs, and reaps, the racial instinct affirms it unjust for another to seize his crop—no matter whether his implements are the product of others' invention, no matter whether the theft is turned to beneficent uses. There is strict analogy between the case of the husbandman, in that respect, and the case of the writer.

The racial instinct of justice declines to believe that, because robbers formerly flourished, and the fruit of the husbandman's labour was frequently stolen by others more powerful, therefore robbery should be abetted and legalised to-day. No precedent justifies an essential injustice.

The writer's claim to the fruit of his labour is not the less valid to-day because Shakespear stole three hundred years ago.

The ideas of Shakespear's day were in many respects barbarous. In Shakespear's day, a writer stole freely. True. And in Shakespear's day 1*l.* per head was paid for the discovery of witches, who were hanged duly. We have improved upon Shakespear's day in both respects.

But barbarous conceptions still linger. Within the last few years Irish peasants at Clonmel murdered an old woman as a witch. Within the last few months voices from Sydney and Melbourne Universities have defended Kipling's plagiarism.

Let us stamp out those barbarous conceptions.

Civilised law, based on the racial sense of justice, now upholds an author's property in his original work for forty-two years, and defends him from piracy. Some writers have contended that, where copyright is clear, the writer's title to his property should be as permanent as a title to any other kind of property.

The fact that Shakespear and Molière took other people's property where they found it, does not appear to have had weight with the enactors of international copyright.

Thus the opinion of international jurists supports the racial sense of justice. And the influence of the best modern writers is thrown against plagiarism. It is the man with nothing to lose who denounces Property. It is usually the writer with nothing to lose who denounces property in writings.

Again: because of Art, Justice.

The best economical incentive to industry is this: that a man shall receive the reward of his labour.

The best incentive to artistic creation is this: that the artist shall receive the credit and profit of his art.

In a community of thieves, industry decays. In a community of plagiarists, Art decays.

"Stop thief!" Justice cries it. Art echoes it.

But Kipling's notion of literary honesty is quite other; for he writes:

*"When 'Omer smote 'is bloomin' lyre,
He'd 'eard men sing by land an' sea;
An' what he thought 'e might require,
'E went an' took—the same as me!"*

There you have, in Kipling's own words, Kipling's own idea of his writer's privilege. He has realised the commonplace that no man works for himself or by himself. We all build our palaces or hovels with the materials which other men have collected; and the most we can hope to do is to bring a little, a very little, that our own hands have felled from the unexplored forest or dug from the virgin mine. Originality comes chiefly in the use of the tools and materials, in the shaping and plan of the edifice.

But there are three ways of dealing with our debt to predecessors. We can acknowledge the debt; we can ignore it; or we can repudiate it outright. The first way is honest; the last way is knavish; the middle way is the way of compromise with conscience so as to get all possible credit at the least possible cost of principle.

It is the middle way that Kipling has chosen. His fine talent, his splendid industry, would not by themselves have raised the pile of excellent work that stands

to his profit and reputation. Kipling has realised that to be exploiter pays better than to be inventor ; and he has become a capitalist of other men's brains, developing facts and ideas that would be for the most part useless without his intelligent control. But the labourers get no share of the profit of Kipling's industry—possibly they do not deserve a share, seeing that they contribute so little to make the product marketable ; and the whole credit of the enterprise goes to Kipling. For answer to objectors, there is printed with Kipling's work the frank declaration, the cynical confession, that has just been quoted.

Kipling's way is open to thousands of men who have so far mastered the technic of their art that they can take a vital idea, pass it through their own minds, and so transform it with their own language that it appears positively new, only the indispensable kernel being borrowed. If a man with Daley's skill in rhymes chose to go to Elizabethan song-books and poetry-books, he would find hundreds of bright fancies, quaint conceptions, that need only re-writing with the art at his disposal in order to be modernised and re-vitalised. There are scores of paragraphs in newspapers every week, contributed by obscure seers, that require only Conrad's or Hewlett's labour to become brilliant short stories. But it is a good thing for Literature that there are few writers as unscrupulous as Kipling. The unwritten literary law, based upon majority-ideas of

honesty, says that you shall not deliberately take another man's proper work as your own without giving that other credit for his transferred value, in his individual degree.

Doubtless Kipling has exceptional talent for this business of literary assimilation; and his own roots also blossom in his work. He can fairly claim that, but for his seeing eye, his ready hand, many of the flowers that he has gathered would have wasted their sweetness, or never would have bloomed at all. His quick recognition of "points" of phrase, or rhythm, or colour, or plot, is perhaps his most excellent faculty. When Kipling wrote "Bill 'Awkins"—

"'As anybody seen Bill 'Awkins?"

"Now 'ow in the devil would I know?"

"'E's taken my girl out walkin',

An' I've got to tell 'im so—

Gawd—bless—'im!

I've got to tell 'im so"—

New Orleans people said at once it was modelled on a familiar negro ditty:

"Hab any o' yo' seen my Lulu?"

"How in de debbil would you know her?"

"I'd know her by her apurn-strings

'N' her shoe-strings a-hangin' on de flo'.

Gol—darn—her!

'N' her shoe-strings a-hangin' on de flo'."

But the New Orleans ditty had only a local audience, Kipling's an international. And of the thousands who admired the vernacular force of "Bill 'Awkins" only a comparative two or three knew that its vigour was born in some humble negro brain on the banks of Mississippi.

Kipling prend son bien où il le trouve, and as he has read more than most men, and travelled much more than most, no single brain can track him to all his sources. But when he wrote "Recessional," the cry was instant that he had borrowed the germ-idea from Cardinal Newman's "England." Comparison will show that he borrowed a good deal more than the germ. Here is Newman's verse:—

ENGLAND.

*Tyre of the West, and glorying in the name
More than in Faith's pure fame!
O trust not crafty fort nor rock renown'd
Earn'd upon hostile ground;
Wielding Trade's master-keys, at thy proud will
To lock or loose its waters, England! trust not still.
Dread thine own power! Since haughty Babel's
prime
High towers have been man's crime.
Since her hoar age, when the huge moat lay bare,
Strongholds have been men's snare.*

*Thy nest is in the crags; ah, refuge frail!
Mad counsel in its hour, or traitors, will prevail.*

*He who scann'd Sodom for His righteous men
Still spares thee for thy ten;
But, should rash tongues the Bride of Heaven defy,
He will not pass thee by;
For, as earth's kings welcome their spotless guest,
So gives He them by turn, to suffer or be blest.*

Let any skilled verse-writer throw Newman's ideas into the metre of these verses accredited to Francis Quarles—*

*Lord God of Gods, before whose throne
Stand storms and fire, O what shall we
Return to Heaven that is our own,
When all the world belongs to thee?
We have no offering to impart
But praises and a wounded heart.*

* In a letter from P. McM. Glynn, Adelaide.—But Kipling may have found his model in the *England and Bengal: and other Poems* of D. L. Richardson, an Anglo-Indian of the last generation. Richardson's book contains a version of "A Khoond War Lyric" addressed "To Laha Pennoo, the God of War," which commences:

*Great God of Battles! Oh, forgive
(For thou our wants and weakness saw,)
If we so long have seemed to live
Regardless of thy glorious law;
Our herds were few, our fields were bare,
Our bravest warriors bowed with care...*

*Great God, whose kingdom hath no end,
Into whose secrets none can dive,
Whose mercy none can apprehend,
Whose justice none can feel, and live,—
What my dull heart cannot aspire
To know, Lord, teach me to admire—*

add a few phrases of his own, a few familiar tags ; and if he does not get the following, with the topic of a British naval review for a text, he will get something very like it—

RECESSIONAL.

*God of our fathers, known of old,
Lord of our far-flung battle-line—
Beneath whose awful hand we hold
Dominion over palm and pine—
Lord God of Hosts, be with us yet,
Lest we forget—lest we forget!
The tumult and the shouting dies,
The captains and the Kings depart ;
Still stands thine ancient sacrifice,
An humble and a contrite heart.
Lord God of Hosts, be with us yet,
Lest we forget—lest we forget!
Far-called our navies melt away—
On dune and headland sinks the fire ;
Lo, all our pomp of yesterday
Is one with Nineveh and Tyre!
Judge of the Nations, spare us yet,
Lest we forget—lest we forget! . . .*

And so on. Seemingly Kipling took emotion and attitude from Newman, metre from Quarles, the line *Dominion over palm and pine* from Emerson,* and the rest from his memory and the daily newspapers. Is it any wonder that (as it has been printed) he flung "Recessional" into the waste-basket? Give Kipling all credit for being the only man to see the "Recessional" chance, and the only man to take it, the only man to fake it: he is an artisan who knows his business. But, on the weakness of "Recessional," to call Kipling a supreme artist, and to hail his product as belonging to the highest class of original art—that is indeed a confusion of categories into which only the ignorant and uncritical can fall.

Nowadays everything that Kipling publishes is to be read with suspicion to the sound of "'Omer's bloomin' lyre." In 1899, the Siegel-Cooper Employees' Association, of New York, asked Kipling for a piece of verse to put on a social programme. There was sent to them this version of a piece from *Barrack-Room Ballads* (p. 157) "with a very cordial note from the poet's wife":

* *And I will swim the ancient sea
To float my child to victory,
And grant to dwellers with the pine
Dominion o'er the palm and vine.*

—WOODNOTES, ii.

*Love and Death once ceased their strife
At the Tavern of Man's Life,
Called for wine and threw, alas!
Each his quiver on the grass.
When the bout was o'er they found
Mingled arrows strewed the ground:
Hastily they gathered then
Each the loves and lives of men.
Ah, the fateful dawn deceived!
Mingled arrows each one sheaved;
Death's dread armoury was stored
With the shafts he most abhorred;
Love's light quiver groaned beneath
Venom-headed darts of death.
Save ye, maidens! This is why
Old men love while young men die.**

Unluckily, while the N.Y. society was still being congratulated on its autograph copy and its good fortune, some bookworm claimed to have turned up these lines in the work of Richard Flecknoe, a third-rate English poet and dramatist in the reign of Charles II.

*Love and Death o' th' way once meeting,
Having passed a friendly greeting,
Sleep their weary eye-lids closing,
Lay them down, themselves reposing;*

* The episode is reported in *The Criterion*, New York, February, 1899.

*When this fortune did befall 'em,
Which after did so much appal 'em;
Love, whom divers cares molested,
Could not sleep, but while Death rested,
All in haste away he posts him:
But his haste full dearly costs him;
For it chanced, that going to sleeping,
Both had given their darts in keeping
Unto Night; who (Error's mother)
Blindly knowing not th' one from th' other,
Gave Love Death's and ne'er perceived it,
Whilst as blindly Love received it;
Since which time, their darts confounding,
Love now kills instead of wounding;
Death, our hearts with sweetness filling,
Gently wounds, instead of killing.*

New York journals appealed to Kipling for an explanation why he had passed off these verses without a hint of debt to Flecknoe; but the oracle, having spoken once, was mute. Oracles are usually sparing of their words; and Kipling presumably contented himself with winking—same as 'Omer.

The plagiarism here is in quite a different category from the adaptation of Ernest Seton-Thompson's method in Kipling's *Jungle Books*, or from the imitation of the cadences and mannerisms of Whittier's "Barbara Frietchie" in Kipling's "Ballad of the King's Jest." In these cases Kipling takes no more than a writer's privilege: he is indebted for inspiration, but

the invention is his own. In his versification (in "The Flowers") of D. Macdonald's description of coastal Victoria, he takes a writer's privilege rather too freely; though such reproductions of another's vision may be defended on the grounds of changed mode and added virtue.

Kipling's "omniscience" astounds commonplace readers no less than his versatility: he is so wonderfully "crammed." As *The Pall Mall Gazette* sang:—

*The secrets of the sea are his; the mysteries of Ind,
He knows minutely every way in which mankind has
sinned;*

*He has by heart the lightships 'twixt the Goodwins
and the Cape,*

*The language of the elephant, the ethics of the ape;
He knows the slang of Silver Street, the horrors of
Lahore,*

*And how the man-seal breasts the waves that buffet
Labrador, . . .*

*He knows each fine gradation 'twixt the General and
the sub.,*

*The terms employed by Atkins when they fling him
from a pub.;*

*He knows an Ekka pony's points, the leper's drear
abode,*

*The seamy side of Simla, the flaring Mile End road;
He knows the Devil's tone to souls too pitiful to damn,
He knows the taste of every regimental mess in
"cham";*

*He knows enough to annotate the Bible verse by verse,
And how to draw the shekels from the British public's
purse——*

Or seems to know. For it is a remarkable thing that Kipling's local reference scarcely ever passes muster with the local resident; his technical jargon scarcely ever rings truly to the technical expert. Kipling's description of every place most impresses the people who do not live there; his use of trade terms appears wonderful to the men in every other trade. He sketches Australia in a few lines, and Ernest Favenc comments on his inaccuracy; he pictures a painter at work, and D. H. Souter objects to his phrasing. The inexplicable jumble of "The Young Queen," with its misapplied "Kaikouras," is a case in point. How could it be otherwise? how expect the swift Kipling method to be also sure? For, as Bedford wrote of Kipling, crudely but racily:

*I put on my specs in Port Phillip, and I spat on
Sydney Quay,
For I'm the bloke that hits it in once—no serving my
time for me!
And I cleaned my nails over Brisbane, and I sneezed
for an hour at Perth,
And then I came home on the English mail and I
wrote of the Big Wide Earth.*

Kipling knows a great deal, especially about India and about Painting—as shown in the Indian stories

and in *The Light that Failed*; but his knowledge even of Painting and of India is superficial, and in some other things he does not go even surface-deep. The allegation that the Indian work was revised by J. Lockwood Kipling, and that *The Light that Failed* was overseen by Sir Edward Poynter, may or may not be correct; but undoubtedly much of Kipling's other work is in glaring need of such skilled revision by a man who knows the subject through and through.

For Australian cavils are paralleled everywhere. When Kipling published his story of "An Unqualified Pilot" on the Hughli river, *The Englishman*, Calcutta, smote him hip and thigh to show that India alone was too vast for Kipling to know, and pilloried some score of conspicuous errors in fact and inference. "Mr. Kipling," said the writer, "has very evidently primed himself by reading the article on the Hughli in *Hunter's Gazetteer*; but he is too careless to transcribe the simplest statement correctly." When he published *Captains Courageous* everybody was amazed at the book's verisimilitude to the life of the cod-fishers—everybody but the cod-fishers. One of their mouth-pieces pointed out to *The Bookman* (N.Y.) that "to anyone who is used to sniff salt water the production smells of the lamp; and he has ruined the talk." The composition of his crew was criticised; and, as for the kellick in the hands of a boy out on the Banks—"I

don't know what one could do with it out there," said a cod-fisher; "I suppose Kipling saw it on shore at Gloucester."

Similarly, this is how the American railroad story—" '007"—strikes an American railroad man (*The Argonaut*, August 16, 1897):—

Mr. Kipling is a keen observer, and writes pretty good American for an outsider; but if he had spent a night in a roundhouse with his ears open he would never have used "loco" for locomotive, or have omitted the familiar "engine" altogether; he would not have said "bogie" when he meant "truck"; he would not have allowed a parlor-car to be hitched to a suburban commuter's train "ahead of the caboose"; he would not have made his engines speak of themselves as "Americans" (in the sense of pattern), or painted his hero pea-green with a red "buffer-bar."

Further, no American writer would use as a simile for brilliancy "a fireman's helmet in a street parade," as few of his countrymen have ever seen a fireman in a metallic head-covering such as is worn in London.

I suppose it's all right to strengthen a situation by omitting the guard-rail from an eighty-foot bridge—it gives a pleasant, breezy, western, get-there-or-bust, nigger-on-the-safety-valve movement; and maybe it's good fiction to bring about the catastrophe with a hundred-pound piglet who "rolled right under the pilot" and thereby caused the "bogies" to lift; but on plain, every-day railroads there is a guard-rail at every open culvert, and even the illustrations to Mr. Kipling's story admit cow-catchers.

I've learned a good deal about India from Rudyard; but when I read his Yankee stories I wonder if, perhaps, I have n't learned some things that are n't so.

That is what most readers fail to wonder. The engineer who finds fault with the catalogue of machinery in "McAndrews' Hymn" sees as little wrong with *Stalky and Co.* as English public-school masters may see with "McAndrews' Hymn." We can all understand a caricature of our own profession; but the caricature of another man's profession, when vigorously made, is apt to be taken for truth. T. E. Page, Master at Charterhouse, told *The Bookman* (Lond.) that "as a record of ordinary school life" *Stalky and Co.* "is a gross and absolute travesty of facts." But "A Farmer's Son," writing to *Literature* (December 31, 1898), did not notice the school characters of *Stalky and Co.*: he complained that Kipling had misused the term "milk-fever"; that manure is not manipulated with a two-pronged, long-handled "pitchfork," but with a three-or-four-pronged, short-handled, dung-fork; and that farm-labourers, used to cattle, would not run from them in a panic as represented by Kipling.

Similarly, the American reader who notices the parody of Emerson's "Brahma" in Kipling's "An American," may ignore the parody of "The Wife of Usher's Well" that a Scottish reader notices in "The Sea Wife." The Indian officer who finds fault with

minute details of Kipling's soldier stories may be supposed to take the nautical Kipling for gospel—not knowing that in the "Ballad of Paul Jones" Kipling "introduces a ship of a rating till then unknown to the navies of the world—a seventy-three." Or that

in the "Clampherdown" ballad Kipling makes a battleship "open fire at seven miles" on a light cruiser, armed with the most awful little Hotchkiss gun, with which the cruiser walloped the battleship, and then the battleship's crew, as she was going down, stepped aboard the cruiser, which was grinding against the battleship's side, and the cruiser's company all lay down and died of astonishment; and then, without being in the least affected by the big battleship's suction, the cruiser sheered off, defying all the laws of physics as she had defied those of the universe, to say nothing of the naval regulations.

For that is criticism by a naval officer who possibly believes that Mulvaney, Learoyd, and Ortheris are correct to the last atom of pipeclay.

Remains to say that, in spite of all, Kipling is for the greater part an original observer, an original writer; that some of his verses will linger long, and that some of his stories are imperishable; and that, because his work is so good, and some of it is in its way so great, it is all the more pity that he should become official pander to "the baser military and commercial spirit"; all the more pity that his writings

should be marked by so many lapses of taste and execution, of truth and honesty. This note of some of Kipling's shortcomings is written to assist in "putting him where he belongs," and to serve as counterblast to the adulation of the mob. That he should be praised as one of the most forcible writers of the last century, in prose and in verse, is no less his desert; though his verse is rarely poetry, and often his prose is merely vigorous journalese.



KIPLING'S childish love of novelty, his childish interest in the last picture of the passing show, have greatly aided his commercial success.

F. P. Dunne satirises admirably Kipling's aptitude to meet a momentary topic with a new set of verses, a temporary fashion with a new book. Modern readers are as eager for novelty as Paul's Athenians were: and why should they not be eager?

Years ago I shared a railway compartment for a couple of hours with William Bede Dalley—one of the most cultivated intelligences that Australia has nourished. The talk fell on books. Dalley said that, looking back over his life, he could plainly trace successive periods of intellectual development—just as, looking at the side of a cliff, one can sometimes distinguish the succession of superposed geological

strata. Fiction was his first love in literature—he was a glutton of novels when a boy. Then he drifted into poetry, and from poetry into history, and from history into science, and from science onward to philosophy. “And now?” “Now,” said Dalley, “I enjoy literature in all its manifestations. But if there is one class of books I prefer to another, I think it must be”—with a flashing smile—“why, New Books!”

There is no disputing the seduction of New Books for Australians. The “new” books are always “out” at the libraries, and one may keep an “old” book thrice as long; while to every well-regulated metropolitan bookshop is attached a staff of customers who know the weekly European mail-day better than the paid employees, and can calculate to a nicety the time when the cold chisel will creak musically into the tops of the precious cases behind the counter. Then and there they cluster like ants round a honeycomb, happy to be permitted to hold the hammer. “It is their hour,” as Pinero puts it. “There is only one hour in a bookman’s week,” says the Notorious Mrs. Ebbsmith—“one supreme hour. His poor life is like the arch of a crescent: so many days lead up to that hour, so many weary days decline from it. No matter what he may strive for, there is a moment when the Case Mail taps him upon the shoulder and says, ‘Man, this hour is the best that Literature has to spare you.’ It may come to him in calm or in tempest, lighted by the

steady radiance of Frederic Harrison, or by the glitter of the evil stars of Marie Corelli; but however it comes, be it good or evil, it is his hour—let him dwell upon every second of it!”

Doubtless Dalley and Pinero knew what they were talking about. In the gloss and crackle of new books there is a bewitching *beauté du diable* that will stir literary blood in spite of all the maxims of experience. You have been stirred by it before: you know it won't last: you half turn away to the time-tested second-hand shelf: then the leaves flutter as some curious Columbus-customer peers between the uncut pages, and your heart flutters too—you are undone. Poor little bird, once more in the coils of the serpent! and . . . how delightful it is! in spite of right-thinking Emerson, with his

Rule 1.—Never read any book that is not a year old—

a rule which he himself was not too careful to keep. And the best of it is that all the booksellers advertise that “customers are not pressed to buy.” They don't care for your money, but they like you to be an ornamental presence in the shop, and lean picturesquely against the shelves, and add a certain tone and distinction to the rows of classics. The booksellers' own special newspapers are continually urging the backward subscriber to dare to be a Daniel—better than a Daniel!—and try and make an attractive little den for

literary lions to come and pick their horrid little bones in. "And d—n the sales!" said one vigorous organ recently. So the New-Book lover glows to think himself a knight bravely spurring his hobby to the assistance of some bookshopping damn-sell in distress.

It is the world-old instinct of the Earth turning gladly to the kiss of the Sun, of Earth-animals leaping from their wintry torpor to rejoice in the Spring: for New Books are the Spring of Literature.

The other staple of bookselling industry is Blue Books. They say that the best-read volume in Maoriland's Parliamentary Library is a French one. This seems strange, since the culture-standard of Maoriland's Parliament is moderate only. But the volume's joyous peculiarity is to contain a number of passages so "darkly, deeply, beautifully blue," even for France, that in order to avoid a governmental onslaught they had to be printed in a foreign language, and the benevolent compilers chose English. And this is how the hair comes out of Maoriland's Parliamentary coconuts.

Of course, members of Parliament are supposed to have eaten of the Fruit, of the Tree, of the Knowledge, of Good and Evil. Libraries "for the general" are more rigorously weeded. When the excellent catalogue of the library of Rockhampton School of Arts reaches Zola, for example, you are directed to *The*

Downfall, *Dr. Pascal*, *Fruitfulness*, *Honour of the Army*, *Lourdes*, *Paris*, *Rome*, and *Truth*; and the catalogue ends abruptly. No naughty *Nana*, no *Pot-Bouille*, no reference to les Rougon-Macquart. But *Lourdes*, and *Truth*, and the rest did not sell well in Australia. It is sad, but it is so.

Yet a few years ago, when you had to purchase Zola like Sunday drinks, with precaution, the Sydney booksellers couldn't keep Zola on their shelves. There was one shop in particular that made a small fortune out of *L'Assommoir*. But if a stranger went and asked for it, the manager scanned him closely and said he didn't know—they might have it—they would see—would he leave the money and his address? Then the stranger would go home, and at midnight a packet with five seals, seven wrappings, and several ounces of string tied round it in complicated knots, would be left mysteriously in a flower-pot in his garden; and in the morning, warned by an anonymous letter, the purchaser would get the packet and disentangle the book and open it at the description of the fight in the laundry, and be happy all the day.

It is sad, but it is no longer so. We have gained sense and lost pruriency; though Australia is still wedded to parochial ways of thought, and "the back-blocks" still exhibit a preference for Blue Books.

Farmers and selectors, as a rule, are poor patrons of literature; and a Sydney bookseller used to tell

how in his young days of ideals and enthusiasm he partly imported, partly compiled an immense manual of agriculture specially adjusted to Australian conditions of weather and crops, and humped it laboriously into the back-blocks. And the representative Australian farmer would dubiously turn over the pages which showed him with many illustrations how he could rise to fortune in three good seasons, while holding his own in the three bad seasons and the three half-and-half seasons intervening, and would groan as he closed the volume that times were too hard—he really couldn't afford it. Then, when the disappointed agent had packed up, and was turning away to curse the representative Australian farmer in his incomings and his outgoings, and his downsittings and his uprisings, and his ensilage and his fodder and his sheep, the r.A.f.'s eye would suddenly brighten with an idea, and he would lean over to whisper hoarsely, 'Say, mister, hain't yer got hany-thing blue? What's thishyer "Maria the Monk" I hear them talkin' about? I wouldn' mind givin' ten bob for somethin' real spicy.' So the book-man laboriously humped his ideals and his enthusiasm and his whole art and practice of Australian agriculture back to Sydney, and sold them for waste paper; and imported tons of *Maria Monk* and *Boccaccio* and *Plain Blue Talk* and the rest; and on his next visit to the backblocks the representative Australian farmer would

ride forty miles after him on the chance of securing "one of them books with pictures of women like yer sold to Bill 'Arris at the Nine-Mile Scrub."



THAT bookseller's experience is another illustration of the dominance of primitive instincts in the country. Those instincts play a larger part in the country than in the cities, since agricultural bush-environment not only fails, as a rule, to stimulate the complex tastes that we associate with civilised life, but gives no opportunity for indulging such tastes when formed. And an unexercised "taste," like an unexercised limb, quickly atrophies and becomes useless. Many of the poorer bush agriculturists are reduced by their environment almost to the level of savages; and their promiscuous relationships shock a city moralist. He calls these "depravity," but there is more reason for calling them "necessity." The city moralist, if he has not wine in his cellar, or ale in his cupboard, certainly has a public-house at his corner. The "immoral" bushman is possibly twenty miles or more from a public-house—where the liquor is never examined by a Government inspector; and when maize is a shilling a bushel he doesn't often visit that public-house. The city moralist has schools for his children, a church for his wife,

a theatre for himself ; parks to walk in and libraries to read in ; music, and picture-galleries, and pleasant scenery, and agreeable social intercourse ; a suburban residence with gas and water laid on, and dainty food, and a white cloth on his table, and flowers, and slippers, and sheets, and many of the other things that help to make life tolerable.

The "immoral" bushman has few or none of these, but he has twenty acres of "clearing" studded with innumerable stumps which he looks forward to digging out in his spare time—and the average city moralist would be a raging and blasphemous heathen long before he had dug out two stumps. Also, the bushman has a creek half-a-mile away with a muddy pool and memories of dead bullocks in it, and he has a leaky bucket in which he painfully carries water from the creek, and he has tweed trousers with fifteen seats in them laid one on top of the other, and boots which he has made of raw calfskin, and a hut with a bark roof kept down by huge stones that bulge it perceptibly and keep the casual stranger awake at night wondering when they are going to fall through on top of him. Further, the bushman has children neatly dressed in oatmeal-bags, and a horse so thin that he cuts the harness, and occasionally he takes his gate off its hinges—if he is rich enough to have a gate—and drives three-inch nails through it, and attaches it to the thin horse, and starts out to "do a bit

o' harrowin'," while the oatmeal-bags toddle enthusiastically behind. And if you are dining with him he may offer you some "goanna," which he recommends as being nice and white, like fish—if it is a bit tough; or a little stewed wallaby; or even a slice of mutton, if there is a squatter near enough to borrow sheep from on dark evenings. And he has economical damper as heavy as the puddings boiled by North Sea fishermen between two dishes lashed together, so that they may swell in the stomach and keep you comfortably full for forty hours at a stretch. And he has heat, and flies, and scrub—and when he tires of these he has more heat, and more flies, and more scrub—and so on to what seems like eternity. And he has—the creature that he calls his wife. She is his theatre, his picture-gallery, his restaurant, his new novel, his pleasant musical evening, and a lot of other city relaxations—all rolled into one.*

The monotonous misery of this picture is realised to the full—with greater or less variety of detail—by hundreds of back-blocks families in New South Wales, in Queensland, and in Victoria—probably in the other Australian provinces also. The city moralist shudders at the sinister crimes that at intervals are reported from the bush, shocking our courts of justice.

* For the phrasing of this page I am greatly indebted to the bright young Australian editor of New South Wales *Agricultural Gazette*—W. H. Clarke.

Place city moralists for ten years in the environment of the desolate bush, and how many of them would act differently?

Some time ago J. A. Andrews, the Gentle Anarchist, now deceased—an enthusiast whose personality, life, and end led one to see what reception a new Jesus would meet from a modern generation—was drawn to ponder these things, and straightway resolved to exploit the revolution obviously slumbering among the mallee cockies. But after a fortnight's mission and starvation he had not persuaded one cockie to awake or arise, so returned despondently to Melbourne and journalism.

Andrews failed in the most important article of rhetoric; he did not identify himself with his audience—did not put himself in their place; he had not learnt the advocate's rule of giving the jury not good arguments, sound arguments, but arguments that will tell. His comparison of country misery and city luxury fell flat, for many of the cockies had forgotten or knew nothing of such luxury—could not effectively comprehend it. To them their own state was the normal state. That Andy Jones killed a bullock every month, and Susy Martin had tea twice a day—there, to the poorer cockie and his wife, was a magnificence they could understand, an ideal they could strive for. But libraries, picture-galleries—of what use were those?

It is exalting, inspiring, to see to what heights the human mind can rise, to mark how it stretches and expands till its generalisations reach infinity, and how it still hungers onward through the territory of knowledge unexplored. But it is weird and terrifying to see how the human mind shrivels and contracts when the sunlight of stimulating environment does not call its rootlets out and up. Now, like the tent in the Arabian tale, it is great enough to house an army; anon it is so small that the palm of your hand will hide it. Conceivably a man of middle age, disillusioned of the world, yet richly endowed with memories of years of social intercourse and action, might find in the vast solitudes of the Australian bush, in its splendid silences, in its seasonal changes and elemental strifes, an intellectual stimulant unique in potency, an intellectual peace in which he could concentrate and develop the best of himself to an extent impossible in the hurry and worry of a city, continually draining nerve-force, as an octopus-sucker drains blood, from a hundred tiny pin-pricks. But the ordinary "selector," uneducated, scarcely stirred by refining influences of arts or letters, with his energy often exhausted day after day by severe muscular labour, goes into the bush as into a mental tomb. The loneliness, the monotony, the round of mean and dispiriting tasks, the eternal pressure of sordid trifles—these things poison hope and aspiration at the source.

A bushman kills the snakes on his "selection"; but there is a snake which avenges them all—the "selection" itself. He may come to it bright in face and weak in body. His body grows; his muscles strengthen; his hands are hard and knotty; but his face becomes vacant, expressionless—he is mentally inert. The "selection" is twined round his throat, stopping the flow of blood to his brain. The pressure tightens—tightens: presently the man is dead. Then, it is likely, he puts a piece of crape round his hat. There are whole bush communities in the N.S.W. agricultural districts where the male residents wear crape habitually constantly. It is a trade-mark, like the butcher's blue apron. A stranger asks, surprised, "Has there been an epidemic?" Not so; these men mourn as by a kind of dumb instinct. The Bush has strangled their souls.

The women do not wear crape in this fashion? Why? Their tragedy is as deep: have they less imagination to realise it? The daughter of the squatter, or small stock-raiser, seems for a time more alive than the son to the palpitations of the universe. But, as far as my observation extends, in the poorer agricultural communities the women live almost contentedly in their—well, with the picture of a struggling selector's home before you, you might say "sty." Many bush women lead you to believe it is no mere legend which declares that, in some neighbourhoods, when a

stray lover from another district woos and wins a girl, she has to be blindfolded to get her on the train.

But the agricultural youth has for a brief period gleams that might almost be called poetic. He has even his "wanderjahre" of a month or two in the great city of his province. Insurance-canvassers or sewing-machine agents driving along a lonely bush track to a township not infrequently meet a lanky, hard-featured, slab-sided son of Australia returning to his father's "selection" ten or twenty miles further on. He wears a soft hat, a new slop suit, and an uncommunicative expression; and says "Good-day!" stolidly, without a hint of the exultation within him. Yet every kookaburra is chattering of his glory; every wallaby along the track is an amazed spectator of his prowess; the sun glints down through the branches, and the breeze blows, and the gum-leaves eddy and whirl—all to swell a triumph greater than Pompey ever dreamt of. "Er hat seine wanderjahre vollendet"; and is returning home with his concertina wrapped in his spotted handkerchief. To-morrow the news will fly like lightning round the district—"Billy Smith's back again!"—and next Sunday after dinner, with the spotted handkerchief tied gallantly round his neck, Billy will sit on the big log near the gate and make music for a mass-levy of neighbours, while he tells of the adventures that befell him in the great city, where lots of the houses have rooms that you do nothing but wash yourself in.

It is quite safe to wager that at this moment there are pacing along scores of lonely bush tracks scores of Australian youths filled with pride and vain-glory, and anticipations of how they will "take down" the boaster who came home last year. And every one of those youths is tenderly carrying a concertina wrapped in a spotted handkerchief. Here is his tribute to Music and Art—his response to the sweet influences of sound and colour—and here probably is represented the climax reached by his æsthetic impulses ere they are stifled in marriage and the monotony of the bush. What pathos! what tragedy!

Between isolated Man and Nature in the bush there is perpetual warfare. You must either dominate or be dominated. Not one in ten thousand lonely selectors can avoid being forced into the familiar agricultural stupor. Australian shearers, who travel much; Australian miners, who often travel more; are frequently compared with Australian agriculturists in point of intelligence, and to the disadvantage of the agriculturists. Put shearers and miners on selections, give them the same horizon to look at, similar trees to cut down, and different cows to get out of the same bog from one year's end to the other, and their superior intelligence will evaporate like morning mist. Of all the cries that are cried to Australian Governments there is none with more force than this: "Help the farmer! favour the selector! for Australia's sake

make the cockie's life more tolerable!" If there are subsidies going, subsidise his roads and let him brush his rust off by friction against his neighbour; if there are endowments to spare, endow travelling lecturers, and teachers, and singers, and reciters, and strolling players—anything to lift him out of the slough of mental stagnation. For the men and women who are fighting the Bush need all the help and all the sympathy that the less plucky or more fortunate inhabitants of the towns can give them—pioneers, as they are, who are fertilising the desert with their lives.



WRITING in an English magazine some years ago, a son of Daniel O'Connell told how he was struck by the fact that the universal adoration of Irishmen never seemed to stimulate his father to personal vanity or to disturb his equanimity. To his son's question how this might be, O'Connell answered simply, "I pray very often." Nor is it likely that the answer was suggested by a mere religious pose. O'Connell's hereditary piety was sufficiently intensified by life-long habit to make sincere prayer both natural and necessary. And doubtless his character was strengthened by the religious faith which to him meant so much—and to Australians, on the whole, so little.

For even the clerical party is forced to admit that every year religion and religious observances have less hold upon Australia, and exercise less influence upon the development of the national character. Our fathers brought with them the religious habit as they brought other habits of elder nations in older lands. And upon religion, as upon everything else, the spirit of Australia—that undefined, indefinable resultant of earth, and air, and conditions of climate and life—has seized; modifying, altering, increasing, or altogether destroying. In the case of religious belief the tendency is clearly to destruction—partly, no doubt, because with the spread of mental enlightenment the tendency is everywhere to decay of faith in outworn creeds; but partly also, it seems, because the Australian environment is unfavourable to the growth of religion, and because there is in the developing Australian character a sceptical and utilitarian spirit that values the present hour and refuses to sacrifice the present for any visionary future lacking a rational guarantee.

O'Connell prayed, and was benefited by prayer, because prayer belonged to his temperament—he was fitted to pray. Doubtless there are still in Europe many similar individuals in whom heredity has not yet been ousted by the progress of thought. But, except as adherents of O'Connell's creed, or among women—with minds more slowly moving, there are very few

of his temperament in Australia. In the religious sense, probably nineteen-twentieths of Australians are heathen. In this country the rudiments of religious faith have been uprooted or were never rooted; we cannot, if we would, derive from daily prayer O'Connell's daily stimulus and solace. Our fathers went regularly to church and chapel as a matter of conscience, and were none the worse for it; we go chiefly as a matter of custom, and are none the better for it in any vital sense; most of us do not go at all. The holy Sabbath, degenerated to the formal Sunday, has become the weekly holiday in city and bush. Beyond the perfunctory observances associated with it, the day is meaningless: it has lost for us the essentially sacred character which it had for O'Connell—which it still has for men of O'Connell's temperament. No one who knows Australia can doubt that these statements are generally true. Our fathers, or their fathers, or some of them, had the kernel of religion: we in Australia have little more than the husk, and we shall have less and less of the husk as the years go by.

The loss of religion is not a thing to deplore, yet it may seem sometimes a thing to regret. With Emerson,

*"I like a priest, I like a cowl,
I love a prophet of the soul:
And on my heart monastic aisles*

*Fall like sweet strains or pensive smiles:
Yet not for all his faith can see
Would I that cowed churchman be."*

The downfall of geocentric philosophy necessarily implies the ruin of geocentric religions. If their relics linger for a thousand years or five thousand, that is little more than a moment in the probable history of the human race; and assuredly humanity will find a rational stick to replace the irrational crutch.

Our present difficulty, and it is not Australia's difficulty alone, is that for many people the influence of reason upon character is not yet so potent as has been the influence of faith.

*"We stand between two worlds, one dead,
The other powerless to be born."*

We have lost religion, and we have not yet adapted ourselves to the loss. Like a drunkard suddenly deprived of his dram, we are ill at ease, unready for emergencies. Whether religion did or did not do more harm than good is a profitless question. The religious stage was one stage in human evolution, as natural as the irreligious stage that is superseding it. Religion gave to all men what they were in their day and generation fitted to receive. To the weak it was an opiate or a maddening draught, but to the strong a magnificent stimulant. In many of the most memorable episodes of history it infused into the veins of

nations a courage and a strength that we have not yet quite attained without it. For the Covenanters, for the Puritans, for the little Dutch republic fighting for its life against overwhelming Spain as for that other little Dutch republic recently fighting for its life against overwhelming Britain, it edged the sword of patriotism and sharpened the pike of liberty. Lacking religion, one cannot but think that some of the most inspiring national contests and resistances of the past would not have been continued quite so strenuously or quite so long. Horatius fought all the better for the ashes of his fathers because he had a sincere reverence for the temples of his gods.

And here in Australia, we have no temples, no ashes worth the name. We have still to make the history and create the legendary associations that are such a powerful binding force in national life. The Murray to Australians is still only a geographical label; but think what the Thames means to an Englishman! Think how Nelson was nerved by the thought of Westminster Abbey; of how his sailors were nerved by the signal "*England expects . . .*"! What a mass of record and tradition, of song and story, of memorable life and love and death, presses behind that *England*! *Australia* is meaningless by comparison, lacking the inspiration of the past. But is it not possible to catch meaning and inspiration from the future? Is it not better to be of those who

make St. Crispin's day worthy remembrance than of those who look back to remember it? This country has still for us few hallowed associations; but if we choose it may have them for our children. If we are not History's legatees, it is because we have the chance to be History's founders and stablshers. And, even already, there are many who see in this vast virgin land a brooding charm not to be exchanged for England's chequered story. There is even already a nostalgia for the breadth of the bush and the breath of the gums that yields nothing in intensity to the nostalgia for the green turf and the hawthorn-buds in pleasant Warwickshire lanes. Even already, how few Australians would exchange for England's glowing national sunset—or if you will, her splendid noon—our own intimate and fragrant dawn?

It is the duty and should be the pride of every father and mother and teacher of Australian children to intensify the natural love of Australia, and to point out in how many ways Australia is eminently worthy to be loved—both the actual land and the national ideal. Good and evil are mingled everywhere; but there is no land with more beautiful aspects than Australia, no ideal with greater potentialities of human achievement and human happiness. Australia may never be a great country; yet it will be the fault of the people, not of the land, if it is not one of the best

countries in the world to live in and die in—given that we are free from foreign aggression until we are able to resist foreign aggression.

“But you have no great rivers.” Well, there have been great nations without great rivers, as there have been great rivers without great nations. Probably, if the Eastern Dividing Chain could be bodily shifted five hundred miles westward, extending the coastal rainfall to the interior, and sending a score of considerable rivers and their tributaries tumbling to the sea, Australian development would be easier and Australian prosperity more assured. Practicably, were Lake Eyre connected with Lake Torrens, Lake Torrens with Spencer Gulf, and the ocean restored to its old home in the central basin of Australia, the clouds evaporated from a vast inland sea might rise to increase the interior rainfall and permanently mitigate the severity of summer climate. But, leaving the impossible and the dubious, what is the measure of national greatness? A vast population or an extended empire does not necessarily make a great nation. “The great city,” says Whitman, “is the city with the greatest man or woman”; and the great country is not that one where millions of people toil squalidly in order that comparatively few may live in idleness and luxury. With a bare ten thousand families, or less, Australia might still be the greatest country in the world, if only every individual had the opportunity

of living the best and most enlightened life that was possible to him—of fulfilling to the utmost his capacities for development and happiness.

It is the false standard of "greatness" that vitiates many published inferences from the decreasing Australian birth-rate. The European nations desire to increase their birth-rate because they are military nations, and because every son is a potential soldier, every daughter the potential mother of a soldier. And, until our numbers are such that we can defy attack, similar reasons have weight in Australia also. But they are not the only reasons that have weight. One may point out that, in the struggle for national ideals, the quality-standard is by far the most important, national existence being once assured. There is no national profit in the multiplication of children destined to live and die miserably. And the decreasing Australian birth-rate might be as much the token of a wise restraint as of a weakening national vitality. Probably it is not; but it might be. We have little occasion for anxiety if the criminal aggregation of the people in the coastal cities were ended. It is in the cities, not in the bush, that the national fibre is being in a hundred ways slackened and destroyed. No one, acquainted with the every-day heroism displayed by our agricultural and pastoral and mining pioneers, can have the least doubt of the stability of the nation if

the Men On The Land are helped and encouraged as they deserve to be helped and encouraged—as it is imperatively necessary for the future of Australia that they should be helped and encouraged.

The making of Australia proceeds, according to the previous argument, without the binding influence of religion. All the more reason, then, to encourage the growth of nascent patriotic sentiment, and to pay attention to the development of individual character. Patriotism may have little or no logical warrant, but while it remains a natural instinct it justifies itself. Yet the future of Australia depends in the last resort neither upon the lessening religious force nor upon the increasing patriotic force: it rests upon the character of Australia's inhabitants. If it be the pride of every Australian boy to become a better man than his father, of every Australian girl to become a better woman than her mother, of every Australian father and mother to rear children better than themselves, both the individual and the nation will surely have their reward.

As of old, it is a Vates Sacer that we need. Wherefore——



THE little iron-grey man stood at the door of his hostel, calmly eyeing the distance. He looked toward Alice Springs, and nothing was visible but the stony floor of the desert, shimmering under a sky of brilliant blue. Here and there a clump of ragged mulgas dotted the expanse; the Mitchell-grass left by the rains had been scorched to dry roots. He moved inside to consider finally the preparations that She had ordered. In the larger room the massive table filled nearly the whole of the space. Around it, on three sides, chairs were ranged so closely that there was scarcely room to walk between them; and at the head, on a dais raised slightly above the floor, stood a chair alone. In such a place, these chairs were remarkable; for each was carved from a solid block of wood, and their grotesque ornamentation seemed to embody the oddest vagaries of aboriginal fancy. Except for the table and the chairs, the room was empty, and the stone walls were uncoloured and bare. The little man surveyed anew the disposition of the chairs, found nothing to alter, and returned to the door. It was not yet ten o'clock, and She had told him to prepare all for Her peculiar hour of noon. He filled his pipe and waited calmly.

A stranger—and all white men were strangers in that district in the heart of Australia—would have wondered to see a stone house, solidly built, standing

so far in the desert. It was away from all roads, and even away from the central telegraph line. No wheel-tracks were seen near it; no path led from it in any direction. Seemingly none but wandering aborigines could have taken advantage of its shelter. Yet there it stood under the fierce sun, in the unbroken silence; and a sign that seemed to mark it as a hostel swung from a projecting beam above the door. Upon one side of the sign was written, in red letters, the word

Riot!

Upon the other side was written, in black letters, the word

Rest.

Beneath the sign the little iron-grey man smoked calmly.

The second pipe was half-finished when his attentive eye perceived upon the eastern horizon a blurred patch that seemed to be detaching itself from the blurred clumps of distant mulga. He watched with calm interest: it was a year since he had seen a white face. The patch quickly defined itself and took shape as a figure on horse-back, that presently trotted up to the door and asked for Scotch whisky. The little iron-grey man surveyed the visitor calmly. He was a small, boyish fellow, with a good-natured expression—his face told nothing in particular beyond good-nature; and he rode an old gray horse that looked as if it had been hungry for several years.

"I suppose this is the place?" he asked, with a light smile.

The little iron-grey man took his pipe from his mouth. "This is the place."

"And what about the whisky?"

"There is nothing but mulga rum; you're welcome to that."

The visitor dismounted, and the gray horse immediately lay down and made noises suggestive of hunger. His rider patted him kindly, and followed the little iron-grey man inside to the smaller room, where a row of wooden vats stood behind a carved wooden counter. The little man filled a glass with a fluid that shone with the deep, intense blue of the sky without.

"And this is mulga rum?"

"Ay; distilled from the sap of the mulga."

The visitor tasted it. "Funny flavour?" he smiled.

"The best flavour," said the little iron-grey man.

The visitor drank, and presently asked for another glass. The little iron-grey man shook his head. "Better not!" he said, and went outside.

"Hold on! I haven't paid you."

The little iron-grey man took no notice. He was watching the arrival of two travellers on foot.

"Now we'll have an explanation of the mystery!" said the leader of the two, a shortish fel-

low with a freckled face framed in rusty-brown hair. "Are you the proprietor of this caravanserai?..... Hullo! You here!" He shook hands with the first traveller without pausing in his question.

The little iron-grey man nodded.

"Then can you tell me why I and my friend here have suddenly felt an irresistible impulse to come to this outlandish place—why we simply had to come—couldn't keep our feet away from it?—and can you tell us, further, who paid our fares and smoothed away the obstacles of the journey?—and can you tell us, finally, why we both had a premonition that we must bring a poem in our pockets?"

The little iron-grey man paused in re-filling his pipe. "You will know later," he said, calmly.

"You haven't sampled the rum yet!" said the first traveller, with his genial smile.

"Rum! Good God! where is it! Come along!" He hurried inside, followed by his mate, a tall, silent person with a long head and eyes of faded blue.

"Well, this is rum!" He held the glass admiringly to the light and sniffed the pervasive odour. He tasted it. "Rum! It is nectar—pure nectar! This is the drink that Ganymede gives to the Gods. And as we are the Gods, you"—he took off his hat and bowed magnificently to the little iron-grey man—"must be Ganymede!" He looked round triumphantly to mark his effect—drank—smacked his lips—and

threw out commandingly the arm that held the glass. "Another glass, Ganymede!"

"Bet——" commenced the little iron-grey man, and checked himself, looking at his guest. He re-filled the glasses. "It's good, isn't it," said the tall man tentatively, resting himself loosely on the counter.

"Good!" The rusty-brown traveller flung out his arms with a gesture of sweeping disdain. "Good! Here is the best liquor in all the earth—in all the earth!—and a far better liquor than they have wit to concoct in Heaven—and this man says it's good! Good! My God!" But seeing that there was no longer an audience (for the little iron-grey man had returned to the door), he dropped his voice and remarked meditatively, "I wonder what we're here for? There are more of them outside."

Indeed, travellers were now fast arriving. The first was a tallish, thinnish fellow on foot, with a sunken visage lighted by soft, dark eyes. He slouched up to the door with, "Well, chaps, I see you're all here!"—and was immediately beckoned to the counter by the rusty-brown man, who had already taken charge of the gathering and was playing the part of host with practised ease.

The next came ambling up on a good horse. He was a muscular fellow, clean-shaven, with an anxious brow; and he threw half-nods all round as he recognised the company. Followed him a stoutish young

man with a florid complexion and a fine dome of skull. He padded leisurely to the door, looking enquiringly around, but with the self-conscious expression of one who is master of his fate and adept in any symbol under cover of which the Universe may hide. Then followed a tribe of others wearing various aspects—all of them (with exception of a lad of seventeen who walked with the air of meditative seventy) being in turn introduced to the sapphire mulga-essence behind the carved counter.

It was now nearly noon. The little iron-grey man cast a decisive glance at the sun, put his pipe in his pocket, closed the door, and calmly motioned the company into the larger room. No sooner were they seated than the reason of their presence seemed to become manifest simultaneously to them all.

"Oh, that's it, is it," said the anxious-browed horseman. "Then——"

"Allow me!" interposed the rusty-brown traveller, rising in his seat with the importance of a master of ceremonies, and moving toward the unoccupied chair at the head of the table. The little iron-grey man, standing beside it, shook his head calmly. "Oh, very well—no matter—I can speak just as well where I am. Gentlemen!—We are met here, as I understand, at the invitation of the Genius of Australia"—he bowed graciously toward the empty chair—"to decide which of our number shall be hailed and acclaimed as Poet Laureate of this magnificent continent."

He paused. In the space upon the table directly in front of the vacant chair, there had become suddenly visible a wreath of gum-leaves. No one had placed it there; it simply manifested itself, like a Mahatma's letter arriving from unknown heights of space. All eyes turned to it; even the elderly lad of seventeen regarded it with mild curiosity. At the same moment there was a rustling of silken garments as if some person had occupied the chair at the head of the table; and all were conscious of a new Presence in the room—a Presence intensely vital, splendidly imperious, distinctly feminine. The little iron-grey man bent in an attitude of worship.

After a moment the speaker continued, in a lower voice: "We are here, gentlemen, I say, to decide which of our number shall be called—er—Laureate of Australia; and I doubt not that you have been impelled to bring—er—as I have, some—er—testimonial of your title to this high and honourable office. I gather that it is the wish of the—er—exalted Personage whom I now understand to be present"—he looked inquiringly at the Chair—"that these testimonials shall now be read, and my own I will proceed to read to you. Possibly, when I have finished"—he gazed invitingly at the wreath of gum-leaves—"it may be thought—er—unnecessary to go any further." He looked round with an air of illumination, and continued: "It has this moment been made known to

me, gentlemen, at the will of our gracious Hostess"—he bowed patronisingly to the Chair—"and, doubtless, to you also, that should my—er—that should any of our poor compositions seem to Her worthy, that wreath of gum-leaves which we see before us will of its own motion ascend to crown the brow of the Laureate. Well, then,"—he smoothed his hair—"ahem!"

AMARANTH.

*THE days rise up in argent pride,
The nights are steeped in purple dreams,
But not for me the radiant tide,
And not for me the poppiéd streams.*

*The cynic years have brought no calm;
No glory dazzles through the haze;
In vain I seek the ancient balm,
In vain the light of other days.*

*Then Youth flung largesse to the winds
That brought new gifts from every clime,
And perfect Love attuned our minds,
And Beauty consecrated Time.*

*And hand-in-hand we wandered through
A dim, delicious orchard-close,
Where many a lovely flower blew
In fragrance to out-vie the Rose,*

*Who flaunted splendour all around
As never since the world began,
Save in the enchanted Persian ground
Of sweet-voiced Saadi's Gulistan.*

*Yet when you stayed to pluck a flower
High-destined to a happier lot:*

*"Yon rose will not outlive the hour,
And even fades forget-me-not,"*

*You said; "but when this day has flown,
That you may aye remember me
Through life, and death, and all, your own—
Take amaranth, and rosemary."*

*And in that shining Aidenn there
Our dreams made music all the day,
With viol, lute, and dulcimer
We watched them pass in brave array.*

*Then you were Queen of Phantasy,
And I was King of Fair Romance:
To us the courtiers bent the knee,
For us the minstrel and the dance.*

*Our throne was one great amethyst
Shapen and carved with cunning arts,
The footstools that our suppliants kissed
Were opals shot with fiery darts.*

*The arras of our presence-hall,
Woven by looms of far Cathay,
Bade Death and Life in worship fall—
So dark its shades, its hues so gay.*

*And pages, slashed and furbelowed,
Sported with scarlet shoulder-knots
Where musical, sweet waters flowed
From sculptured founts and hidden grots;*

*And Love and Joy, with hurrying feet,
Presided over all our hours,
Till came a gust of wintry sleet,
And birds were mute, and drooped the flowers. . .*

*And now, alas! in exile old,
From that fond empire fallen low,
I mourn the days of rose-and-gold,
The halcyon prime of long ago.*

*I know not where your spirit flies,
In what dark realm for succour craves,
Or if in lost Atlantis sighs
And wanders far beneath the waves,*

*Or if in some Hesperides
Where blessed souls, divinely pure,
Beneath the golden-fruited trees
Walk in a peace for ever sure;—*

*But wheresoever you may be,
I pray that God may give me grace
One day in far eternity
To gaze a moment on your face.*

*Come then the torment and the pain!
Come then the tempest of the soul!
I shall be bathed in bliss again
Till Time shall wither like a scroll.*

*For sweet Adonis' festival
The Greeks of old a garden grew,
Where lettuce twined with fennel tall,
But never came a slip of rue;*

*For when the short-lived feast was o'er
The faded wreaths were thrown away,
And why remember, why deplore
(They said) the joys of Yesterday?*

*I, too, grew for the feast of Life
Within my heart a garden rare,
Where Love and Fame, in friendly strife,
And every pleasing flower had share.*

*The rose and regal hollyhock,
Blue lavender and lily, too,
I tended—and the Fates made mock,
For ah! their roots were all in You.*

*I watched them one by one depart,
And of them all remains to me
This fadeless blossom of my heart,
The amaranth of Memory.*

The rusty-brown traveller closed in a cadence of ecstasy, with an expectant eye on the wreath of gum-leaves. There was a little sigh from the Chair, followed by a movement of impatience, and the wreath did not move. "Oh, very well, then——!" He sat down noisily, and scowled as he pushed his manuscript about on the table. The little iron-grey attendant nodded to the wiry horseman, who commenced rather nervously:—

THE HONOUR OF THE DISTRICT.

*HE was a noble Englishman—a-travelling round
the earth*

*To cure a growing tendency to gout—
Or so he said; and ten portmanteaux guaranteed his
birth,*

*But the Cooma District couldn't make him out.
For he turned up at Kiandra, when the carnival
was on,*

*And he won the champion snowshoe-race with ease;
The local heroes hung their heads and said, when he
had gone,*

*'Twas plain the gout had never reached his knees!
His name was something-Cholmondeley; he was very
wide-awake;*

*And all the girls admired his Alpine hat;—
But, you see, it was the honour of the district was at
stake,*

And they couldn't let him travel off with that.

*He was heard of next at Jindabyne, duck-shooting
in the spring,*

*And he killed his birds without a single miss;
And the veteran Jinda sportsmen, who "preferred a
lively wing,"*

*Opened eyes and muttered, "What the gout is this?"
He was asked to Adaminaby, to see some shearing
done*

(He grew fonder of the district every day),

*And the boys all looked delighted when he said that,
just for fun,
He would shear a few to drive the gout away.
So they chose a heavy wether, with a real mountain
fleece,
And they showed him how he ought to hold the shears
(The points away) and how to pluck the wool
(like plucking geese),—
And they stood around prepared with cheerful jeers.*

*But the stranger gripped the wether like a workman
with his knees,
And his stroke was swift and clean—a ringer's clip;
He had finished that big wether in five minutes, if
you please!
And had pinked as if the boss was at his hip.
He said he felt that nothing helped like shearing for
the gout,
And he kept the pickers going all the day;
The ringer had shorn eighty-five, when Cholmondeley,
with a shout
Marked "Ninety!"—(and the bell rang)—"Wool
away!"
But he said, of course with practice he would really
get up speed:
The thing was to make sheep obey your eye;
In love, and war, and sport, and work, an English-
man could lead
If he only once made up his mind to try.*

*But the boys were very sulky, for they hadn't a reply,
And they put their heads together what to do,
When suddenly Wild Donegan jumps up and slaps
his thigh:*

*"By Hokey! lads, we'll see the beggar through!
We'll have a little steeplechase, a sweet three mile
or so,*

*And set the course down Nungar mountain side;
We'll make a jolly day of it, and ask the girls below,
And we'll string my noble Johnny on to ride!"*
*A deputation went at once to state the little plan,
And the Englishman was willing —for, of course,
Though he wasn't any horseman, he believed that any
man*

With good English blood could sit upon a horse.

*The day came round, and such a crowd was never seen
before,—*

*From every station round, from every town,
From Tumut, Gilmore, Adelong, they rallied by the
score*

To see the noble Englishman put down.

*They gave him a young brumby that was only ridden
twice,*

*But he managed to stick on through all the chaff;
And then the starter called them, and they cantered in
a trice,*

While the girls picked places ready for the laugh.

*The start was up among the clouds that hid the
mountain top,
And the riders all seemed dropping on your head;
You'd think that once they tumbled they would surely
never stop
Till they landed in the rocky streamlet-bed.*

*They came down helter-skelter, and the stones flew in
their wake;
And they risked their necks, quite careless of a fall,
For they knew the tarnished honour of the district was
at stake—
But the Englishman rode straightest of them all!
He brought his mount in lengths ahead, a-tremble and
a-foam;
When the others straggled after in a tail,
He was talking to the girls about the hunting leaps
“at home”—
Forty feet of ditch beyond a nine-foot rail!
He feared he had done badly—since he saw they
looked askance,
But he wished he had his Shetland pony there
He had ridden when a youngster—that he might have
had a chance
To show the girls what Englishmen could dare!*

*And the boys of Adaminaby, with faces long and
glum,
Loosed bridles and rode silently away:*

*They felt too sick for cursing, but they wished in
Kingdom Come*

The Johnny who had beaten them that day.

*But jolly Jeanie Mackie was with indignation full,
And she gathered all the girls together there:*

*Says she, "The boys have failed to get this Johnny by
the wool,*

So we girls will try and catch him by the hair.

*He put them down quite easily—no wonder that they
frown!—*

But the honour of the district is at stake;

*And there's one thing, girls, I wager that he never will
put down—*

And that's a slice of Tumut Christmas-cake!"

*Now, the Tumut cake is famous over all the country-
side,*

For the recipe is never known to fail:

*'Twas invented by a bushranger to welcome home his
bride,*

And they hanged him for the crime in Wagga gaol.

*It is tougher than the hair-ball that you find inside a
cow,*

And the currants break your teeth off when you bite:

*There was no one ever heard of who could eat a slice,
they vow,*

And a single crumb will turn a stranger white.

*So they set to work and made it, and they mixed it
double strength,*

For the treacle using glue, to take no chance;

*They baked it for a week or more, and when 'twas
done at length
They invited all the district to a dance.*

*The noble Englishman came first; his dancing was
renowned;*

*He put all the local steppers in the shade;
And he held the girls so deftly that they never
touched the ground,*

*But flew like birds—no matter what they weighed.
So they felt a little sorry when the supper-bell rang
out,*

*And even Jeanie's voice commenced to shake
When she said, "Oh, Mister Cholmondeley, you are
hungry now, no doubt,*

*Won't you try a slice of Tumut Christmas-cake!"
But he simply said "With pleasure!" Lord! that
man had pluck in stacks!*

*And she passed him a great slice upon a plate
(They'd chopped at it for half-an-hour, until they
broke the axe)*

And all the people gathered round to wait.

*They saw it was the real thing, as black as night
inside,*

*With a tricky sugar icing, pink and white;
And strong men gasped and shuddered, and the women
nearly cried,*

As the Englishman prepared to take a bite.

*He took it, and it held his jaws as firmly as a vice;
But the courage of the dogged British race
Rose within him, and he stiffened all his muscles to
the slice,
And he ate it without stirring from his place!
But hardly had he finished when he gave a fearful
yell,
And leapt in air eleven feet or more;
He writhed, and squirmed, and fought, and tore, and
wriggled where he fell,
And his horrid groaning noises shook the floor.*

*They almost felt remorseful as they watched the
wreck he made,
So they lifted him and put him in a bed;
And all the girls stood round him with their hand-
kerchiefs displayed,
And when the spasms had left him, thus he said:
"Here die I an Englishman, who loved his country
well,
And my enemies I honestly forgive;
But there's no man born of woman, and no devil out
of hell,
Who could eat a slice of Tumut cake and live!"
So he died, as was expected, and the people all agreed
It was right the district honour so to save;
And his funeral was elegant as any man could need,
And three parsons were discoursing at his grave.*

*And the boys all threw a clod upon the coffin—just for
luck,
And the girls sowed weeping willows for his sake;
Though bonnie Jeanie Mackie lost her pride and lost
her pluck,
And cried at home as if her heart would break.
They got a Sydney tombstone up, with all his names
in full
(There were nine beside the Cholmondeley)—and a
text;
For they knew a noble Englishman is pure merino
wool,
And they didn't want his mother to be vexed.
So the job was neatly finished; every man his shilling
gave,
For the honour of the district was at stake;
And they tell the stranger proudly: "He was bravest
of the brave;
But we put him down—with Tumut Christmas-
cake!"*

There was a sound from the Chair as of a half-suppressed laugh—a laugh deliciously toned; but the wreath did not move. The tall, fair traveller, who several times had half-risen from his seat, seized the occasion, and chanted these lines in a voice that seemed to roll from dark caverns of memory.

THE SOUTHERLY.

*The City lay a-swelter in the heat
That tarnished all her flowery diadem,
And quieted her clamorous wheels of Trade,
Till even lovers moved on lagging feet,
And, drooping like sad lilies on the stem,
The little children hushed their play, and sought the
blessed shade.*

*A watcher on the City's tallest spire
Saw through the pallid haze that seemed a shroud
The ghastly human hive, and heard below
Strange sounds come piercing through the mantle
dire—*

*A stricken man that raved and shrieked aloud,
A girl's hysteric laugh, a tortured infant's wail of
woe.*

*The watcher turned him where the brooding South,
Urging her black battalions, closer crept,
Threatening like some great dragon of the skies,
Till sudden through the streets that parched with
drouth*

*There came a Wind, a Lion-Wind that leapt,
Roaring, and clutched the City's throat, and fiercely
took her prize.*

*And he who cast the stormy horoscope
Beheld the veil dissolve in gusty waves,
And hearkened to the Whirlwind Voice that pealed*

*"Arise! I bring you peace and living hope,
Balm for the sick, and rest that labour craves,
And cool sea-blessings: rise a queen, and be for
beauty healed!"*

*Then She that lay beneath the shroud awoke,
With every icy breath renewing life,
And through her streets with luring eyes ashine
The maidens passed, while happy laughter broke
From litten windows, and old Joy was rife,
And men praised God for love and strength, fair
women and red wine.*

He delivered the last line with impressive unction ; but the gum-leaves only shivered slightly, as if a breeze had passed over them. The little iron-grey man nodded to the first-comer, who rose with an apologetic smile.

"I'm afraid mine isn't of very much account," he said ; "but of course I don't take myself very seriously, and I'd never dream of expecting any such honour as that which is proposed for one of the others, who I'm sure are all very much better than I am." This modesty being greeted with encouraging cries of "Go on!"—and a marked wave of sympathy proceeding from the Chair—the speaker was emboldened to read the following :—

BEAUTY'S A-FLOWER!

*THE sun goes down in glory,
The long day's toil is done:
'T is time to tell the story
That waits for set of sun.
Gray Ronald whinnies waiting;
The good horse knows his task;
For Night's the time for mating,
And Love has but to ask.*

*So mount in haste, fond lover!
And o'er the plain away;
There's fifteen miles to cover,
And back by break of day.
Through cabbage-gums a-blossom
In Springtide's lavish dower:
With million-creaming bosom
The grey Bush is a-flower!*

*Then up the rocky ridges,
Along the silent creek
Where spiders build their bridges
And ghostly curlews shriek;
Till, swift as Love's own shallop,
We skirt the timber dead
And settle for the gallop—
The fence a mile ahead.*

*What fence would stop a lover
With Beauty waiting there!
So off . . . and up . . . and over!
With half-a-yard to spare.
Was ever good horse bolder!
What reck though Fortune lower;
The foam-buds gem his shoulder—
Gray Ronald is a-flower!*

*A mile, and then I wander
The garden path I know:
See! in her window yonder
The trysting light burns low.
Hush, voice! what need of token?
Hush, heart! her pledge is true:
Such faith was never broken;
She's yours, and all for you. . .*

*A footstep patters lightly,
A face upturns to mine,
A snowdrift breast heaves whitely
And misty blue eyes shine:
O, Love it is Life's noon-light
And this Love's day and hour—
Her lips meet mine in moonlight,
And Beauty is a-flower!*

“You're out of it!” cheerfully remarked the rusty-brown traveller, who had recovered his natural good-humour. “Who's next?”

"I believe I am next," said the traveller with the Jovian brow, rising rather ponderously.

"Excuse me!" said another who had listened hitherto with some air of discontent, while moving uneasily on his chair.

"Oh, certainly!" chuckled his rival, and plumped down again.

The impatient poet cleared his throat and began:

IN THE DAYS WHEN THE BEER WAS
STRONG.

*THE earth goes round with a weary sob, and our
lives are sad and pale,
And half of the heroes are out of a job, and half
by the heels in jail;
The same old crank with the same old kink we meet
in the same dull throng—
And a bloke can't drink as he used to drink in the
days when the beer was strong.*

*When the North brewed liquor that stung like Death,
and the East and the West did too,
And the Golden Beer of Elizabeth brought the Golden
Age anew;
When Spain was thrashed by a malt-bred horde that
conquered the French in song,
And all the world was drunk as a lord in the days
when the beer was strong.*

*'Twas honest stingo and honest food—in the days of
the Lovely Thirst—*

*When men were coopers and casks were good—and
yet they were forced to burst.*

*The blokes would follow you like a lamb if you
shouted for aides-de-camp—*

*Ah, Beer was a noble oriflamme in the days when the
beer was strong!*

*They tried to drink as a freeman should—they were
happier men than we,*

*With ale that hummed for years in the wood and
never begat D.T.*

*'Twas a tankard big as a bucket then, and swigging
in turn, ding-dong,*

*And they held their breath till they bottomed like men
in the days when the beer was strong.*

*We drink like women, and feed as such—the coats of
our stomachs we guard—*

*Where scarcely the rum o.p. could touch, the spawn of
a pump bites hard;*

*Though tea and the cowardly cocoa-nib the life of the
cur prolong,*

*Men pledged each other and told no fib in the days
when the beer was strong.*

*Think of it all—of the liquor you miss! Study the
dregs in your glass!*

*Study the past! And answer this; IS BEER AS GOOD
AS IT WAS?*

*The coal-tar slop and the strychnine hop have done us
a crimson wrong:*

*No matter who fell it were better to drop as they did
when the beer was strong.*

*With its dull, brown taste of a threepenny bar the
dreary beer goes down:*

*Is this the result of the Maori war?—is this Aus-
tralia's crown?*

*Is this the sequel of Southward Ho? of the New-
Chum's cheerful song?*

*The heart of the rebel makes answer "No! We'll
fight till the beer grows strong!"*

*Our beer shall yet be a better beer—for the State shall
start to brew,*

*With lashings of malt, and hops not queer, and white-
grown sugar too.*

*The road to Freedom is round by the Vat! Hurry
and come along!*

*Sons of the Drinkers! Vote for that! Vote till the
beer grows strong!*

Before the last line had ceased to sound, the
ponderous bard was on his feet and ready.

"You might give it time," snapped the rusty-
brown traveller, with his eyes on the wreath.

"Oh, by all means," replied the other with a bene-
volent smile, "but it seemed to me there was question
of giving it eternity."

"To understand your piece, I presume?" sweet-
ly retorted the objector.

"Gentlemen! Gentlemen! This is not seemly," interposed the little iron-grey man; and order being restored, the dignified traveller regarded the assembly blandly, fingered his manuscript, and proceeded.

"The piece that I am now about to read to you, Madam"—he addressed the Chair with formality—"may be considered somewhat difficult of apprehension; but that is a quality which it shares in common with everything that represents the triumph of refined taste as opposed to that of the gross herd—'la multitude vile,' as Baudelaire fitly describes them. I admit, however, that it is not designed to be ingested in the process of oral recitation. I purpose, therefore, adding some slight gloss or commentary that may aid in the explication of the theme. I may add," he continued, letting his glance fall with severity upon the rusty-brown traveller, who had snorted audibly, "that as my poem is divided into eighteen sections, each section containing six stanzas, I shall be grateful for complete silence"—he paused for emphasis—"during the delivery. To commence, then. The title of the piece is

THE SOUL OF THE SEER.

"Perhaps I should explain that a title is really an excrescence; since a poem, like a poet, is born in a perfect shape, without any tag or label whatever. Still, I have decided to give titles for the present (with-

out extra charge) as a concession to the ignorance of the populace. Without further preface, then:

THE SOUL OF THE SEER.

"I may say that I believe a poet may be fitly likened to a spider, and my own internal store seems to me to yield an endless thread of verse. My first section has been drawn through a Mexican cigar, but I can just as readily draw through ice. The symbol will be found equally as glutinous in the one case as in the other. Resuming, therefore:

THE SOUL OF THE SEER.

"It occurs to me that, with this introductory piece, I should explain my method. I write poems that are to all appearance intelligent, if not intelligible, and I spread an obvious significance in decorative language, much as a peacock spreads his tail. But behind this exoteric meaning I shall conceal an esoteric meaning which adepts will discover, and which is the real justification of the poem. The common mob will see me, as it were, fishing for trout in a peculiar river (to use a Shakespearean symbol literally), but the elect will recognise that I am catching the Secret of Life in the abyss of the Universe. It will always be open to discussion how much of the Secret I catch, since each of my pupils, even among the elect, will receive only that portion of my message which he is fitted to receive. But this remainder of doubt is a consequence of the

inadequate means of expression supplied by language, and is not necessarily to be deprecated. Qua Symbolic Poet, I find that I can pose most conveniently as a Veiled Mokanna, after the fashion of that Hakem ben Haschem of whom we read in d'Herbelot's account contributed to *La Bibliothèque Orientale*: for the reason that, if I be at times obscure, we shall have a preliminary presumption that the fault lies with minds too gross to pierce my lustrous mystery. I shall endeavour, when possible, to begin with an easy line, thus:

the matin stroke inaudible expireS

"I regret that I cannot vocally represent the effect that I attain by transferring to the end of the line of verse the capital letter printed usually at the beginning: this being one of the especial eccentricities by which I desire to be distinguished. Since, however, I have entered upon an explanation, I may as well add that my first section represents apparently the attitude and emotions of a man who stands under a shower-bath and soaps himself all over before he discovers that the water has been turned off. This symbolises to me the dream of an idealist who has swathed his life in aspirations toward the divine purity of Heaven, and who awakens in the grave to the sensation of worms crawling upon him and the realisation that he is beginning a career in Purgatory. In

this way I leap from the individual to the general, according to the accepted doctrine of Art, leaving to my disciples (when I gain them) the duty of withdrawing each the symbol particular to himself. To commence, therefore :

THE SOUL OF THE SEER.

the matin stroke inaudible expires
winging to caverns murk'd of silent sound :
steals sinister the cohort of desire
where prison'd in voluptuous profound

slumbrous obscurities (O whither fly,
ye shapes august!) I vision'd overturn
yawning the daisied coverlet awry
till victor in the æon-strife I burn

with vast resolve jetted from starry heights

He paused. "You have of course perceived, Madam, that I am working on two planes or platforms at once. On the lower platform I have set-off the alarm clock in the same phrase by which (on the higher platform) I have blown Gabriel's trump. My obvious subject has turned over in bed in a line that contains plain hints of Resurrection morning. I may be pardoned for asking attention to more subtle touches—especially to those which you cannot see.—My next verse is more difficult: it is unwise to make the Symbolic path too easy, for the egotism of disciples who have overcome all obstacles is apt to lead them to

fancy themselves as great as the Master—a contingency carefully to be avoided. Continuing:—

*with vast resolve jetted from starry heightS
 whose white magnificence derides the duN
 inchoate melancholy anchoriteS
 brood in Diogenes' dark malisoN*

“Perhaps I should hint (on the lower platform) that Diogenes lived in an empty tub; but I deem it unjust to this audience to interpret further: in tuas manus, Domina!

*from labyrinthine chrysalis the cluE
 spars alabaster writhing in reversE
 of cold lustration: saponaceous gluE
 adheres that choral heaven can abstersE.*

“I admit that this verse is not up to my Symbolic level: it is too simple: the next verse atones. It is my object to show you, not poetry in the making, but Poetry in the matrix, purged of grosser particles.

*but sudden twining anguished tentacleS
 seize loath despairing sinuositY:
 drouth-banished, dephlegmated pinnacleS
 stand starkly-arefied monstrositY.*

*the mast's firm, delicate assault to skieS
 ah, shipwreck-shattered! fails not more than hE
 whose shivering soul resigns the high emprisE,
 shrouded a-squirm in crackling agonY.*

"Here ends the first section of my poem, and I doubt not you will agree with me that it is worthy to be called sublime. The more you study it, the more you will see in it: it will take you many years to understand it fully, and then you will not be certain that you understand it in the least. My second section is symbolically somewhat more complex. I here develop an idea formulated by the Master—I need scarcely say that I allude to N. S. Stéphane Mallarmé. Thus I commence:

O Blue! O Blue! O Blue! O Blue! O BluE!—

He paused. All eyes, and ears, were turned to the Chair. Yes, there it came again—a sound scarcely breathed, softly modulated; yet a snore, a distinct, unmistakable Snore!

A hot-tempered poet rose, stuttering: "B-b-but this is m-m-monstrous! I haven't read m-m-mine yet!"

"Nor I!" "Nor me!" "We haven't read ours!" cried fourteen poets in chorus.

Everybody rose and gesticulated with the exception of the traveller whose reading had been interrupted. He seated himself with the expression of Eugene Aram in the condemned cell, and gazed into Space. The hubbub grew around him. The rusty-brown traveller, vociferating, "Listen to me!" was powerless to quell the tumult. The little iron-grey man appeared perplexed, but calm.

Suddenly there was silence. As mysteriously as She had come, they felt the Presence vanish. For a moment they were awed. Then a poet rose to his opportunity. "I have not yet read mine," he explained; "but mine is undoubtedly the best. Therefore ——" And he stretched over the table and grasped the wreath of gum-leaves.

That is, he grasped the space where the wreath had been. For, even as he touched it, it disappeared beneath his fingers: seemingly it had melted into air. There remained—a single leaf.

Instantly the poets nearer to the leaf threw themselves upon it. Those farther from the leaf threw themselves upon the poets. There was combat and a scuffle. Loud voices affirmed superiority; louder voices denied. Several poets on the outskirts of the struggling mass commenced to read their pieces to each other. Then the little iron-grey man perceived it was time to act.

Upon his hint several left the room. The others he collared and took in turn to the door, kicking them forth calmly, but not unskilfully. When all were out, he closed the door.

No sooner had a poet reached the open air than he tottered and fell, and slept instantly where he fell. Not one who had partaken of the mulga rum escaped its potent stupor. The youthful antique alone remained erect, gazing pensively at the prone forms that strewed the earth around him. While light

remained, he busied himself in inditing a poem descriptive of the scene. When the light failed, he chose the plump and dignified traveller for a pillow, and slept deliberately. Above him, in the newly-risen breeze of evening, the sign of the hostel creaked backward and forward between its legends of RIOT and REST—RIOT, and REST. And the vast wings of Night drooped over all.

When the travellers woke at daylight, dishevelled but buoyant, they stared round in surprise. They lay, or sat, or stood, among the stones of the desert. The hostel had vanished. The more curious searched for its site, but found no trace that a building had stood where they remembered it. Then—was Yesterday a dream? No; for an ambient odour of mulga rum still remained like a blessing upon the spot. "The rum at least was real," muttered the rusty-brown traveller regretfully.

It was fortunate that some of them had sandwiches in their pockets; and they remembered having passed a waterhole not far away. Gradually they made their way back to civilisation. Nobody yet wears the crown of gum-leaves.

But the leaf remains in the possession of the poet with the best right to it.

THE END.

It is regretted that at p. 74 (footnote) THE EDUCATION OF THE CENTRAL NERVOUS SYSTEM, by R. P. Halleck, was accredited to F. Halleck by my "automatic mind," familiar with Fitz-Greene Halleck's vigorous verses.

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Copyright, 1904.—Finished printing 26th July, 1904, for publication 1st August, 1904.—Wm. Brooks & Co., Ltd., Printers, Sydney.—Edition of 2,000 copies in paper at 3s. 6d. ; 200 in cloth, gilt top, at 6s. ; total, 2,200 copies.

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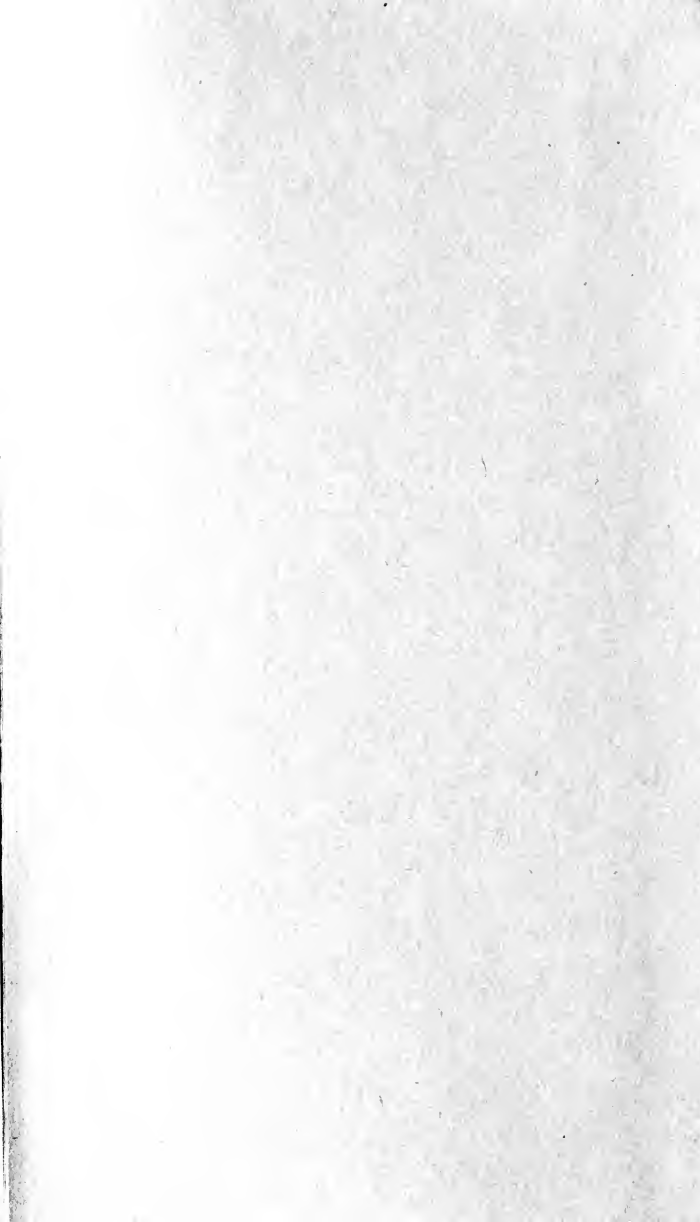


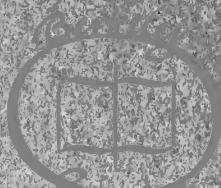
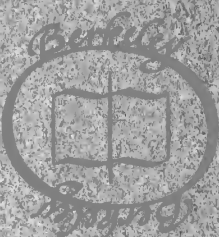
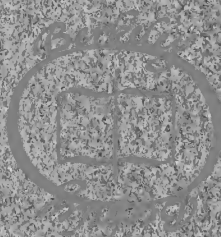
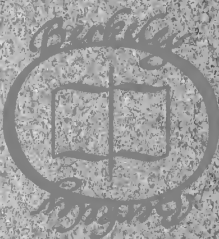
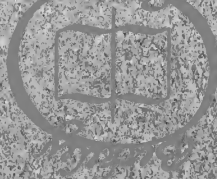
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